Epochs of English Literature

VOLUME I

THE CHAUCER EPOCH

1215–1500

BY

J. C. STOBART, M.A.

EPOCHS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

VOLUME I.

THE CHAUCER EPOCH

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THE CHAUCER EPOCH

1215-1500

BY

J. C. STOBART, M.A.

ASSISTANT MASTER AT MERCHANT TAYLORS' SCHOOL

174642
17.10.22.

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD

41 & 43 MADDOX STREET, BOND STREET, W.

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PREFACE

THE series of which this little volume is the first may be said to have three purposes: First, to teach the history of our literature in a rational and orderly manner; second, to illuminate the history of England by exhibiting the thoughts of its men of letters in their own words; and, third, to display, as if in a gallery, some specimens of the inheritance into which every English-reading boy and girl has entered. It has been too long the practice to teach English literature in handbooks which give only the briefest examples, if any, of the works they profess to describe; and our many excellent school anthologies, from their want of a definite historical arrangement, and the absence of prose, fail almost entirely to give a connected view of the development of our language. Now, the history of our literature falling, as it undoubtedly does, into a series of well-marked periods of excellence, appears to lend itself peculiarly to the historical treatment suggested by the word 'epoch.'

As to the principles of selection, I have tried to choose work of intrinsic interest only, work suitable for use in schools, and work which permitted of abstraction from its context without great detriment. 'Scrappiness' is a charge to which all anthologies are open, but I have tried to lessen its force by the preponderance of lyric songs, the admission of a tale of Chaucer almost intact, and the complete poem of *The Nut-brown Maid*. In the case of prose, neither Mandeville nor Malory suffers much by selection, and I have tried to choose

episodes complete in themselves, and likely from their interest to send the student to the original.

I feel, next, that there is required some explanation of the principles of orthography here adopted. In a vexed and difficult problem I am wholly with those who prefer the original spelling or the nearest approach to it that our manuscripts permit. One would be sorry to see the 'Cokadrilles' and 'Olyfauntes' of Mandeville or the 'bewis' and 'twistis' of King James in their modern dress. Yet it will be found that in some cases I have been compelled to modernize. This for two sufficient reasons: in the first place, the length of notes and glossary is thereby much economized; and, secondly, by making the way easier for the reader, you enable him to cover more ground in the same time. There is here, I hope, plenty of ancient spelling for the linguistic teacher. But at the same time it will now be possible for *The Man of Lawes Tale* to be read aloud in class, which, with the original spelling, is almost impossible. I believe, indeed, that the fame of Chaucer has suffered by the difficulties of his spelling, and Chaucer is too high a genius to derive his merit from the epithet 'quaint' or the archaic flavour of a strange orthography.

It is not easy to acknowledge all my debts. To my friend Mr. Frank Sidgwick I owe many valuable suggestions, the fruit of his wide knowledge of early English, some poems hitherto neglected by editors, and the permission to use his scholarly editions of *Popular Ballads of the Olden Time* and *Everyman*. To Professor Skeat the editor of a school-book of this kind is bound to be deeply beholden. I must also thank Mr. E. C. Gibson, of St. John's College, Oxford, for much kindly assistance.

J. C. S.

March, 1906.

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'Nay he dooth, as if your iourney should lye through a fayre Vineyard, at the first give you a cluster of Grapes; that full of that taste, you may long to passe further.'

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

THE CHAUCER EPOCH

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY may be called the record of the abnormal; it is from literature that we get to know the heart of a people. This may seem a strange claim when we consider that the historian is searching for truth among hard facts and figures, and the poet is building castles of the imagination. Yet it will be found that, while the poet is unconsciously giving us the true picture of himself and his times, the historian is no less unconsciously distorting the truth. Life is not, and never has been for any nation, a series of accessions and deaths of monarchs, battles, treaties, parliaments, and laws. The literature of a period, read side by side with its history, will serve to give a truer and completer picture of its men and its minds than the completest catalogue of dates, kings, and battles. It is desired to make this picture as complete as possible by the selections here presented. The reader will here find in turn most of the characteristics of that day—its simple piety in the carols and hymns, its superstitious love of the miraculous in Mandeville's *Travels*, its passion for chivalry and romance in *The Man of Lawes Tale* and Malory's stories, its childlike love of spring and flowers and birds in the opening songs, and something of the darker side of it in the fierce satire of Langland's *Vision*. Only one feature of it, the animal humour, uncouth and unashamed, is here of necessity suppressed.

The Scope of this Book.—The history of literature might be represented on a barometric chart by a series of zigzags—

periods of rise and fall—and at the top of each, generally speaking, there is one great name, to which predecessors lead and from which successors fall away. Such a list as this—Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth—might stand as a list of the epochs of our literature on the poetic side ; and the object of this series is to exhibit the history of our literature from that point of view, to show how these great ones arose, what they did, and what followed them. The first epoch of intelligible English is that of Chaucer. Our first task, therefore, will be to show what there was in the beginning of our language to make the coming of Chaucer possible.

Beowulf.—The history of English literature begins with BEOWULF, the little-known Homer of our language. It is true that Beowulf has nothing to do with Britain. Its scenes are laid in Denmark and Sweden, but it is written in the Anglo-Saxon language, and is the earliest literary monument of any Teutonic people. The story is of a Viking prince, Beowulf, who fought and overcame a terrible dragon, Grendel, and then slew Grendel's mother, and then a monstrous Fire-drake that devastated the land. The description of the wild, monster-teeming moorland is fine and terrible. The metre of the poem is precisely that alliterative rhythm which Langland employed almost ten centuries later (for the original Beowulf is assigned to the fifth century A.D.) in the *Vision concerning Piers the Plowman*, here presented. It is needless to say that this epic is entirely pagan, except for certain later additions, and is quite unintelligible to the modern reader who does not understand Anglo-Saxon.

Cædmon.—It was about the seventh century that Britain became English and Christian. An important date is that of the Synod or Council of Whitby in 664, by which the Church of England was definitely established in allegiance to Rome. It was at Whitby, in 680, that there died CÆDMON, our first named English singer. There is a well-known beautiful story

of how the gift of song came upon him from God, and he used it for God's praise in his "Song of Creation," of which the *Genesis*, discovered by Archbishop Ussher, is a part, probably authentic. It is noteworthy that his poems were shown to Milton in 1655, when they were first printed.

Alfred.—Of the Venerable Bede we need not speak much here, for his *Ecclesiastical History* was written in Latin. He did indeed translate the Gospel of St. John into English, but this has perished. We should also remember that among his pupils was that Alcuin, who, to the credit of English learning, directed the intellectual efforts of Charles the Great. More important in this review is KING ALFRED (849-901), that splendid King who, with high patriotic purpose, founded schools, and translated with his own hands the *Consolations* of Boethius, Bede's *History of England*, and other monastic school-books, adding to them matter of his own for the instruction of his people. He also caused the *Saxon Chronicle*, begun about 800, to be revised and completed. The account of the wars with the Danes, written therein by Alfred himself, is the most important monument of Saxon prose.

Layamon.—Then comes the Norman Conquest and three centuries of darkness, while our language was in the mixing-bowl. William of Malmesbury, the historian, Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Arthurian chronicler, and others, wrote in this island, but their language was Latin. Others wrote in French. In English there is nothing until LAYAMON wrote his *Brut*, about 1205. Layamon was a priest of Worcester-shire, who wrote, still in the alliterative rhythm of Beowulf, an account of the early history of Britain. The name of the poem is taken from Brutus, a mythical great-grandson of Vergil's hero, Æneas, who was supposed to have become King of Britain. It deals largely with the Arthurian legend, and is derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin *Historia Britonum*, through the French of Wace. The language is now English, and may be understood with difficulty.

Orm and his Contemporaries.—Of ORM, the priest, and his poem, *Ormulum*, we need say little. It is of prodigious length—20,000 lines—and yet a mere fragment of the task he projected, which was to translate into popular language, with explanations, those portions of the New Testament appointed to be read in churches. His theories about spelling are curiously pedantic, and are explained in his poem. His metre is the same as before. It is therefore astonishing to find that, side by side with this, the regulation metre of the English language, there were coming into life those beautiful and elaborately versified little songs, of which our first selection is an example. We must, I suppose, see in these the work of the "mynstrailes," spoken of with tolerance even by the fierce Langland (X. 33), men who had learnt in France and Provence the rhymes and rhythms of the troubadour. And yet they sound strangely native and popular, these early songs. It must not be forgotten that the first of them is dated about 1225—that is to say, it is almost contemporary with the lengthy *Ormulum*, which was written in 1215, the year of Magna Carta. One prefers to see in these, "the earliest pipe of half-awakened birds," the pioneers of that long line of lyric singers who have made our language the treasury that it is. Orm and Langland are the descendants of Beowulf; but the writers of *Mirie It Is* and the *Cuckoo Song* are the ancestors of Shelley and Keats.

Langland.—It behoves us now to say a word or two about WILLIAM LANGLEY, or LANGLAND (for the surname is uncertain), the author of the *Vision concerning Piers the Plowman*. He was brought up from boyhood, probably in a priory, in or near Great Malvern, where the scene of his vision is laid. In date he is contemporary with Chaucer and Gower—that is, from about 1332-1399—but in language and style belongs to an earlier age. He lived for the greater part of his life in London, where he earned a meagre livelihood by singing dirges at the funerals of the rich. You have the

picture of him: Long Will, tall and haggard and fierce, considered a madman by those who knew him, raging in his heart against the rich and their oppressions, against the false Churchmen and their impostures—a Radical and a Nonconformist out of date. His one work—the work of his life, often corrected and enlarged—is his *Vision concerning Piers the Plowman*, type of the honest labourer, who at the end of the poem is strangely transformed into Christ Himself. It is a satire on contemporary society, ill constructed and tedious in the course of its 7,000 lines, but with patches here and there of vigorous and bitter humour that remind us of Juvenal or Hogarth. Of all English writers he is in spirit most really akin to John Bunyan.

Prose Writers.—Verse always precedes prose in early times, when few can write but many can remember and repeat. The father of English prose, a title erroneously bestowed upon Sir John Mandeville, is really JOHN WYCLIF the Reformer. He held the mastership of Balliol College, Oxford, until 1381, when his religious views caused him to be dismissed from the University, whereafter he retired to his Rectory of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, and devoted himself to his great work, the translation of the Bible from the Vulgate or Latin Version. As it is difficult to incorporate any of this important work in the text, I give here a short specimen of his translation:

Matt. iii. 1-6: "In thilke dayes cam Joon Baptist prechynge in the desert of Jude, saying, Do ye penaunce: for the kyngdom of hevens shall neigh (nigh). Forsothe this is he of whom it is said by Ysaye the prophete, A voice of a cryinge in desert, Make ye redy the wayes of the Lord, make ye rightful the pathes of hym. Forsothe that ilke Joon hedde cloth of the heeris of cameylis and a girdil of skyn about his leendis; sothely his mete weren locustis and hony of the wode. Thanne Jerusalem wente out to

hym, and al Jude, and al the cuntre aboute Jordan, and thei weren crystened of hym in Jordan, knowlechynge there synnes."

Now this work, which had an enormous circulation throughout England, had a proportionate effect upon our prose language. One may notice that, apart from the spelling, it is readily intelligible to-day, and would be still more so in the North, where such words as "thilke and "ilke" still survive. Wyclif also scattered broadcast a series of pamphlets in vigorous homely English, in which he denounced the practices of Rome. Of Mandeville, who is largely in every respect, one must admit, an imposture, more will be found in the notes to IX.

The Immediate Predecessors of Chaucer.—Other pre-Chaucerian poets of the fourteenth century are the Scottish poets THOMAS THE RHYMER, of Ercildoune, and JOHN BARBOUR; and in England RICHARD ROLLE, LAURENCE MINOT, and ROBERT MANNYNG, of Brunne (see VIII. and the note thereto). Few of these are of great importance, though the continuity of Scottish bards from the earliest times must be observed and remembered. As for England, we shall have to admit that Chaucer, the father of English poetry, is heir to nobody. Indeed, if we want to find any premonitory symptoms of his arising, we must go to Italy. There, in the city of Florence, at the very beginning of the fourteenth century, along with the great masters of early Italian art, were three giants of literature who profoundly affected the taste of Europe. Dante, with his epics, transmuted Vergil into modern currency; Petrarch set the lyric fashions of the sonnet and the ballade; and Boccaccio is the father of the modern novel. Now, Chaucer went upon an embassy to Florence in 1372. Dante was then dead, but Chaucer certainly read, and often quotes him. Petrarch and Boccaccio he may have met personally. In the latter lively but im-

moral writer he certainly found a copious source of inspiration, and perhaps the very idea of the *Canterbury Tales*. These three, then, had a great influence upon the mind of Chaucer, though not to the detriment of his credit for originality. In his best phase he is wholly English.

The Life of Chaucer. — The most important fact to remember about GEOFFREY CHAUCER is that he led the life of a courtier from his youth up. Born about 1340, the son of a London vintner, he was probably educated at Cambridge (for there is no sufficient argument to set against his intimate knowledge of that town and its suburb of Trumpington), and at the age of seventeen became a page to the wife of Edward III.'s third son Lionel, Duke of Clarence. He followed that Prince to the wars in France, was taken prisoner, and ransomed by the King before the Peace of Bretigny. Thenceforward he was under the powerful patronage of John of Gaunt. In 1367 he began a series of foreign embassies to France and Italy, and in 1374 received the comfortable post of Comptroller of the Wool Customs in the Port of London. In 1386 he sat for Parliament as Knight of the Shire for Kent. Then, in the absence of his patron, John of Gaunt, he fell into poverty, and lost his offices for a time. But in 1389 we find him employed upon repairs at Westminster, Windsor, and the Tower of London as Clerk of the Works. Richard II. granted him a pension of £20, and this was increased upon the accession of Henry IV., son of John of Gaunt. He was in the zenith of his powers about 1388, the probable date of the *Prologue*. In his last decade his mind seems to have turned to religion, and the quality of his work deteriorated. He died, while engaged upon *The Parson's Tale*, in 1400, at a house in Westminster, and was buried in that transept of the Abbey which we call after him Poets' Corner.

His Qualities.—There is no question but that Geoffrey Chaucer is among the very greatest of our poets, and has laid

us under an immense obligation. We owe him, it may almost be said, our English language ; for the East Midland dialect in which he wrote became thenceforward the literary language of our country. His mastery over the art of poetry is most remarkable, without considering the fact that he had to fashion his laws for himself. Probably few English poets before Byron rhymed so freely or wrote so easily and melodiously as did Chaucer. He employs commonly two metres, the rhymed heroic couplet, here shown in the *Prologue*, and the "Rhyme Royal" (so called in honour of Chaucer's follower, King James I. of Scotland, who also employed it). The better we understand his metrical laws, and the more perfect we get our text, the more do we realize his mastery as a craftsman in verse. Indeed, if the reader should find here any line of him uncouth in its rhythm or faulty in its rhyme, he should ascribe the fault, not to the poet, but to his editors. Also, let us not fail to admire the spirit of Chaucer, the *humanity* of it, large-minded, happy, gentle, observant, gravely humorous, the quick feeling for beauty in sound and colour, in nature and in man. Not even Wordsworth has loved the spring so well, or has felt more deeply the love of birds and flowers. In the prologue to his *Legend of Good Women* he tells us how he loves the daisy :

> "And as I could this fresshë flour I grette
> Kneeling alway, till it uncloséd was,
> Upon the smallë, softë, swotë grass."

Or take such lines as :

> "And smallë fowlës maken melodyë
> That slepen all the night with open yë."

Or :

> "And fiery Phœbus riseth up so bright
> *That all the orient laugheth of the light.*"

Such lines are surely the quintessence of English poetry. There is also a charming freshness in his style. One loves the simple candour with which he shows his mind in such phrases

as "me list nat tellen," "there nis no more to seyn," or, "this is the ende." Of tender pathos he is pre-eminently master.

His Works.—The critics divide Chaucer's literary work into three distinct periods. In the first period he was under French influence, and wrote the poem called *A. B. C.*, *The Compleynt to Pity*, and the *Book of the Duchesse* (a lament for Blanche of Lancaster, wife to John of Gaunt, who died in 1369); he also translated the French *Roman de la Rose*, though it is uncertain how much of what is ascribed to him under that title is really his. His second period, of Italian influence, follows the Italian embassy, and begins about 1372. His chief works of this period are the delicately humorous *Parlement of Foules*, *Troilus and Cressida*, the *Hous of Fame*, and the *Tales of the Second Nonne* and the *Man of Lawe*. In his third period, in which he broke away from foreign influences, he did some of his best work in the *Legend of Good Women* and the *Canterbury Tales*. The *Prologue*, generally esteemed as his best work, was written about 1388.

His Successors.—JOHN GOWER, "the moral Gower," as Chaucer calls him, not without irony, was a lesser contemporary. It is characteristic of the times that his three chief works are in three different languages. His *Confessio Amantis* is, like the *Canterbury Tales*, a loosely-strung series of romantic, semi-historical tales; it is written in short, rhymed lines of eight syllables. It is a great storehouse of medieval tales, about thirty thousand lines long, written with extraordinary fluency, but very little genius. You have only to compare Gower's *Tale of Constance* with this of Chaucer to see what is the quality which marks a great poet. John Gower wrote also *Speculum Meditantis* in French, and *Vox Clamantis* in Latin. But Chaucer had many imitators also, some of whose work has long passed as the master's. THOMAS OCCLEVE wrote much, but rather tediously. Fuller reference to him

will be found in the note to his poem. JOHN LYDGATE, a monk of Bury, was a remarkably prolific and versatile writer of Chaucer's school. His *Storie of Thebes* is introduced as an additional Canterbury Tale, and his *Falles of Princes* found much popularity. In Scotland ROBERT HENRYSON was influenced by Chaucer, KING JAMES I. acknowledges him as master (see XV.), and WILLIAM DUNBAR was the worthiest follower of all. The latter, however, who forms the link between Chaucer and Spenser, belongs in date to the next epoch.

English Characteristics.—Summing up our view of the literature of this period, we may say that, while the satire of William Langland is truly representative of the English national muse, in its matter no less than its metre, we owe the metrical forms, the rhymes and rhythms of Chaucer and the early minstrels to France and Provence. On the intellectual side, the mind of Chaucer is nourished on the classics, especially on Boethius, but also on Vergil, Cicero, and Livy; Mandeville also knows his Pliny. The thing that I believe to be genuinely *national* in this book is the Nature-sense—the feeling so remarkably expressed throughout for spring and the song of birds. This was certainly not to be learnt from the Roman classics, nor, I think, from the love-songs of Southern Europe, nor even from Dante and Petrarch. This has always been the dominant note of native English literature, except at periods when foreign or artificial influence for a time overpowered it. The other noteworthy feature of this period is the religious element. It must not be forgotten that the arts of reading and writing were confined in those days almost solely to the Church and the Court. Chaucer represents the latter; he was a courtier, and what we should now call a Civil Servant. But Orm, Layamon, Mannyng, Wyclif, and Lydgate were Churchmen, and Langland was probably educated in a monastery for the Church.

The Drama.—The Church is also the parent of the stage in England. The monks, doubtless, read their Seneca diligently, and some of them were well acquainted with Plautus and Terence. It is not surprising, therefore, that they should, at an early date, have perceived the value of the drama as a means of enforcing simple Scriptural truths upon an unlettered audience. The result was the Miracle Play, a little drama representing Scriptural scenes and episodes. As early as the twelfth century the priests were acting their Miracle Plays in their churches. Afterwards they were performed by the trade guilds, and there is an interesting set of twenty-five of them written by one Ralph Higden of Chester by special leave of the Pope in 1328. The Miracle Play survived until the days of Elizabeth, but side by side with it there sprang into being the second development—the Morality. The Morality Play was an allegory in which the virtues and the vices were personified, as will be seen in our selection from *Everyman*. This, of course, prepared the way for real comedy and tragedy, for our first dramatist, John Heywood, Nicholas Udall, Sackville, and Still; but these are of the next epoch.

The Reading of Chaucer.—Final *-e*, *-ed*, *-en*, *-es*, throughout this volume are commonly to be reckoned as separate syllables; for convenience in reading they are here marked with the diæresis (*ë*). Final *-e* should be pronounced (as in French poetry) as a very short *a*-sound (*smallă foulăs*), not as a *y*. Secondly, a more careful pronunciation of final syllables is required, especially in the suffix *-tion*, which with us by slipshod usage has become *-shun*, but in old English is to be given its full value of two syllables, as *devo-ci-oun*. Many words of French origin retain the French accent, as *ágreable*, *áventure*, *languáge*, *penánce*. Note that the final *-e* elides before a vowel or *h*. For fuller information about this final *-e*, which is the mark of various old inflexions, the student is referred to the edition of Morris and Skeat.

A Few Grammatical Points.—It is not possible here to give a complete grammar of the subject, but one or two points may be emphasized: (1) The termination *-en* in nouns denotes the plural, in verbs the infinitive, or the past participles of strong verbs, or the plural of any tense. (2) The termination *-es* in nouns denotes either the genitive singular or the plural; it is also the mark of an adverb, as *onës, twiës.* (3) The prefix *i-* or *y-* (A.-S., *ge*) can be attached to past participles.

The Paston Letters.—Although they are not, strictly speaking, literature, I have thought that this epoch would not be complete without some specimens of this remarkable series of documents. The Pastons were a respectable, almost noble, family of Norfolk, and the letters, written at various dates from 1422 to 1509, cover the whole troubled period of the Wars of the Roses—the reigns, that is, of Henry VI., Edward IV. and Richard III. Their authenticity has been disputed, but is now firmly established. They were first published in five large volumes by Sir John Fenn between 1787 and 1823. The first head of the family in the correspondence was Sir William Paston, a Judge of the Common Pleas, who lived from 1378 to 1444. As throwing sidelights on the history of the period, these letters stand in the same class as the letters of Cicero and Pliny the Younger, or as the diaries of Evelyn and Pepys. Indeed, they are more instructive than any of these, in that they were written with no notion of posterity or publicity. They prove that, after all, human nature is very much the same at all periods, and that even at the most exciting epochs of history the ordinary mind is more concerned with questions of food, clothing, and personal gossip than high questions of politics. We shall be surprised to find that the style is remarkably easy and correct, that learning is not despised, and that civilization is at a fairly high level, even among the Wars of the Roses.

I.

WINTER.

MIRIE it is while sumer ilast
With fugheles song.
Oc nu necheth windës blast
And weder strong.
Ei, ei, what this nicht is long!
And ich with wel michel wrong
Soregh and murne and [fast].

II.

CUCKOO SONG.

SUMER is icumen in,
Lhudë sing cuccu!
Groweth sed and bloweth med
And springth the wudë nu.
Sing cuccu!
Awë bleteth after lomb,
Lhouth after calvë cu;
Bulluc sterteth, buckë verteth,
Murie sing cuccu!
Cuccu, cuccu, well singes thu, cuccu;
Ne swike thu naver nu;
Sing, cuccu, nu, sing cuccu,
Sing cuccu, sing cuccu, nu!

III.

ALISOUN.

Bytuene Mershe ant Averil
Whan spray biginn'th to springë,
The lutel foul hath hirë wyl
On hirë lud to syngë.
I libbe in love-longingë,
For semlokest of al thyngë,
He may me blissë bringë,
Icham in hire bandoun.
An hendy hap ichabbe y-hent,
Ichot from hevene it is me sent,
From allë wymmen my love is lent
Ant lyht on Alisoun.

On heu hire her is fayr ynoh,
Hire browë broune, hire eyë blake;
With lossom chere he on me loh;
With middel smal ant wel y-make;
Bote he me wol to hirë take
For to buen hire owen make,
Long to lyven ichulle forsake
Ant feyë fallen adoun.
An hendy hap, etc.

Nihtës when I wend and wakë
For thi myn wongës waxeth won;
Lévedi, all for thinë sakë
Longinge is y-lent me on.
In world nis non so wyter mon
That al hire bounté tellë con;
Hire swyre is whittore than the swon,
Ant feyrest may in toune.
An hendy hap, etc.

Icham for wowyng al forwake
Wery so watér in wore;
Lest any revë me my make
Ichabbe y-yerned yore.
Betere is tholien whylë sore
Then mournen evermore.
Geynest under gore
Herkne to my roun—
An hendy hap, etc.

IV.

HYMN TO THE VIRGIN.

Of on that is so fayr and bright,
Velut maris stella;
Brighter than the day is light,
Parens et puella.
Ic crie to thee, thou see to me,
Lévedy, prey thi sone for me.
Tam pia,
That ic motë come to the
Maria.

Of karë conseil thou ert best,
Felix fecundata;
Of alle wery thou ert rest,
Mater honorata.
Bisek him wiz milde mod,
That for ous allë sad is blod
In cruce,
That we moten come til him
In luce.

Al this worldë was for-lore
Eva peccatrice,
Tyl our Lordë was y-bore
De te genetrice.
With *ave* it went away
Thuster nyth and comz the day
Salutis ;
The wellë springeth ut of the,
Virtutis.

Lévedy, flour of allë thing,
Rosa sine spina,
Thu berë Jhesu hevenë king
Gratia divina ;
Of allë thu berest the pris,
Lévedy, quene of paradys
Electa :
Maydë mildë, moder *es*
Effecta.

V.

THE SONG OF THE ROSE.

Of a rose, a lovely rose,
Of a rose is al myn song.
Lestenyt, lordynges, both elde and ȝynge,
How this rose began to sprynge ;
Swych a rose to myn lykynge
In al this world ne knowe I non.

The aungil cam from hevenë tour,
To grete Marye with gret honour,
And seydë sche schuld bere the flour
That schuldë breke the fyndës bond.

The flour sprong in heye Bedlem,
That is bothë bryht and schen:
The rose is Mary, hevenë qwyn,
Out of here bosum the blosmë sprong.

The ferstë braunche is ful of myht,
That sprang on Cyrstëmessë nyht;
The sterre schon over Bedlem bryht
That is bothë brod and long.

The secunde braunchë sprong to hellë,
The fendys power doun to fellë;
Therein myht non sowlë dwellë;
Blyssid be the time the rosë sprong.

The threddë branche is good and swotë,
It sprang to hevenë crop and rotë,
Therein to dwellyn and ben our botë;
Every day it schewit in prystës hond.

Prey we to here with gret honour,
Che that bar the blyssid flowr,
Che be our helpe and our socour.
And schyld us fro the fyndës bond.

VI.

CAROL.

Adam lay ibounden,
Bounden in a bond;
Four thousand winter
Thoght he not too long;
And all was for an appil,
An appil that he took,
As clerkes finden wreten
In herë book.

Ne hadde the appil takë ben,
The appil takë ben,
Ne haddë never our lady
A ben hevenë quen.
Blessed be the time
That appil takë was
Therfore we maun singen
Deo gratias.

VII.

CAROL.

I SING of a maiden
That is makëles,
King of all kingës
To her sone she ches.
He cam all so stille
There his moder was,
As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the gras.
He cam all so stille
To his moderes bour,
As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the flour,
He cam all so stille
There his moder lay,
As dew in Aprille
That falleth on the spray.
Moder and mayden
Was never non but she:
Well may swich a lady
Godës moder be.

VIII.

PRAISE OF WOMEN.

ROBERT MANNYNG.

No thyng ys to man so derë
As wommanys love in gode manerë.
A gode womman is mannys blys,
There her love right and steadfast ys.
There ys no solas under hevene
Of allë that a man may nevene
That sholde a man so mochë glew
As a gode womman that loveth true.
Ne derer is none in Goddis hurde
Than a chaste womman with lovely worde.

IX.

THE VOIAGE AND TRAVAILE OF SIR JOHN MAUNDEVILLE, K^{T}.

PROLOGUE.

AND for als moche as it is longe tyme passed, that there was no generalle Passage ne Vyage over the See; and many Men desiren for to here speke of the holy Lond, and han thereof gret Solace and Comfort; I, John Maundevylle, Knyght, alle be it I be not worthi, that was born in Englond, in the Town of Seynt Albones, passed the See, in the ȝeer of our Lord Jesu Crist MCCCXXII, in the Day of Seynt Michelle; and hidre to have ben longe tyme over the See, and have seyn and gon thorghe manye dyverse Londes, and many Provynces and Kingdomes and Iles, and have passed thorghe Tartarye, Percye, Ermonye the litylle and the grete; thorghe Lybye, Caldee, and a gret partie of Ethiope; thorghe

Amazoyne, Inde the lasse and the more, a gret partie; and thorghe out many othere Iles, that ben abouten Inde; where dwellen manye dyverse Folkes, and of dyverse Maneres and Lawes, and of dyverse Schappes of Men. Of which Londes and Iles, I schalle speke more pleynly hereaftre. And I schalle devyse 3ou sum partie of thinges that there ben, whan tyme schalle ben, aftre it may best come to my mynde; and specially for hem that wylle, and are in purpos for, to visite the Holy Citee of Jerusalem; and the holy Places that are thereaboute. And I schalle telle the Weye, that thei schulle holden thidre. For I have often tymes passed and ryden the way, with gode Companye of many Lordes: God be thonked.

THE YLE OF CALONAK.

There ben also in that Contree a kynde of Snayles, that ben so grete, that many persones may loggen hem in here Schelles, as men wolde done in a litylle Hous. And other Snayles there ben, that ben full grete, but not so huge as the other. And of theise Snayles, and of gret white Wormes, that han blake Hedes, that ben als grete as a mannes thighe, and some lesse, as grete Wormes that men fynden there in Wodes, men maken Vyaunde Rialle, for the Kyng and for other grete Lordes. And 3if a man, that is maryed, dye in that Contree, men buryen his Wif with him alle quyk. For men seyn there, that it is resoun, that she make him companye in that other World, as she did in this.

From that Contree, men gon be the See Occean, be an Yle that is clept Caffolos. Men of that Contree, whan here Frendes ben seke, thei hangen hem upon Trees; and seyn, that it is bettre, that Briddes, that ben Angeles of God, eten hem, than the foule Wormes of the Erthe.

From that Yle men gon to another Yle, where the folk

ben of fulle cursed kynde: for thei norysschen grete Dogges, and techen hem to strangle here Frendes, whan thei ben syke: for thei wil noughte, that thei dyen of kyndely Dethe: for thei seyn, that thei scholde suffren to gret peyne, ȝif thei abyden to dyen be them selfe, as Nature wolde: and whan thei ben thus enstrangled, thei eten here Flesche, in stede of Venysoun.

Aftreward men gon be many Yles be See, unto an Yle, that men clepen Milke: and there is a fulle cursed peple: for thei delyten in ne thing more, than for to fighten and to sle men. And thei drynken gladlyest mannes Blood, the whiche thei clepen Dieu. And the mo men that a man may slee, the more worschipe he hathe amonges hem. And ȝif 2 persones ben at debate, and peraventure ben accorded be here Frendes or be sum of here Alliance, it behovethe that every of hem, that schulle ben accorded, drynke of otheres Blood: and elles the Accord ne the Alliance is noghte worthe, ne it schalle not be ne repref to him to breke the Alliance and the Acord, but ȝif every of hem drynke of otheres Blood.

And from that Yle, men gon be See, from Yle to Yle, unto an Yle, that is clept Tracoda; where the folk of that Contree ben as Bestes and unresonable, and duellen in Caves, that thei maken in the Erthe; for thei have no wytt to maken hem Houses. And whan thei seen ony man passynge thorghe here Contrees, thei hyden hem in here Caves. And thei eten Flesche of Serpentes; and thei eten but litille, and thei speken nought; but thei hissen, as Serpentes don. And thei sette no prys be no richesse, but only of a precyous Ston, that is amonges hem, that is of 60 coloures. And for the name of the Yle, thei clepen it Tracodon. And thei loven more that Ston, than onything elle; and ȝit thei knowe not the vertue there of: but thei coveyten it and loven it only for the beautee.

Aftre that Yle, men gon be the See Occean, be many Yles, unto an Yle, that is clept Nacumera; that is a gret Yle and good and fayr: and it is in kompas aboute, more than a 1000 Myle. And alle the men and women of that Yle han Houndes Hedes: and thei ben clept Cynocepali: and thei ben fulle resonable and of gode undirstondynge, saf that thei worschipen an Ox for here God. And also everyche of hem berethe an Ox of Gold or of Sylver in his forhed, in tokene that thei loven wel here God. And thei gon alle naked, saf a litylle Clout. Thei ben grete folk and wel fyghtynge; and thei han a gret Targe, that coverethe alle the Body, and a spere in here hond to fighte with. And ȝif thei taken ony man in Bataylle, anon thei eten him. The Kyng of that Yle is fulle riche and fulle myghty, and righte devout aftre his Lawe: and he hathe abouten his Nekke 300 Perles oryent, gode and grete, and knotted, as Pater Nostres here of Amber. And in maner as wee seyn oure Pater Noster and oure Ave Maria, cowntyng the Pater Nosters, right so this Kyng seythe every day devoutly 300 Preyeres to his God or that he ete: and he berethe also aboute his Nekke a Rubye oryent, noble and fyn, that is a Fote of lengthe, and fyve fyngres large. And whan thei chesen here Kyng, thei taken him that Rubye, to beren in his Hond, and so thei leden him rydynge alle abouten the Cytee. And fro thens fromward, thei ben alle obeyssant to him. And that Rubye he schalle bere alle wey aboute his Nekke: for ȝif he hadde not that Rubye upon him, men wolde not holden him for Kyng. The grete Cane of Cathay hathe gretly coveted that Rubye; but he mygthe never han it, for Werre ne for no maner of Godes. This Kyng is so rightfulle and of equytee in his Doomes, that men may go sykerlyche thorghe out alle his Contree, and bere with hem what hem list, that no man schalle ben hardy to robben hem: and ȝif he were, the Kyng wolde iustifyed anon.

Fro this Lond men gon to another Yle, that is clept Silha : and it is welle a 800 Myles aboute. In that Lond is fulle mochelle waste ; for it is fulle of Serpentes, of Dragouns and of Cokadrilles ; that no man dar duelle there. Theise Cocodrilles ben Serpentes, ȝalowe and rayed aboven, and han 4 Feet and schorte Thyes and grete Nayles, as Clees or Talouns : and there ben some that han 5 Fadme in lengthe, and sume of 6 and of 8, and of 10 : and whan thei gon be places, that ben gravelly, it semethe as thoughe men hadde drawen a gret Tree thorghe the gravelly place. And there ben also many wylde Bestes, and namelyche of Olyfauntes. In that Yle is a gret Mountayne ; and in mydd place of the Mount, is a gret Lake in a fulle faire Pleyne, and there is gret plentee of Watre. And thei of the Contree seyn, that Adam and Eve wepten upon that Mount an 100 ȝeer, whan thei weren dryven out of Paradys. And that Watre, thei seyn, is of here Teres : for so moche Watre thei wepten, that made the forseyde Lake. And in the botme of that Lake, men fynden many precious stones and grete Perles. In that Lake growen many Reedes and grete Cannes : and there with inne ben many Cocodrilles and Serpentes and grete watre Leches. And the Kyng of that Contree, ones every ȝeer, ȝevethe leve to pore men to gon in to the Lake, to gadre hem precyous Stones and Perles, be weye of Alemesse, for the love of God, that made Adam. And alle the ȝeer, men fynde ynowe. And for the Vermyn, that is with inne, thei anoynte here Armes and here Thyes and Legges with an oynement, made of a thing that is clept Lymons, that is a manere of Fruyt, lyche smale Pesen : and thanne have thei no drede of no Cocodrilles, ne of non other venymous Vermyn. This Watre rennethe, flowynge and ebbynge, be a syde of the Mountayne : and in that Ryver men fynden precious Stones and perles, gret Plentee. And men of that Yle seyn comounly,

that the Serpentes and the wilde Bestes of that Contree ne will not don non harm, ne touchen with evylle, no strange man, that entrethe into that Contree, but only to men that ben born of the same Contree. In that Contree and othere there abouten, there ben wylde Gees, that han 2 Hedes: and there ben Lyouns alle white, and als grete as Oxen, and many othere dyverse Bestes, and foules also, that be not seyn amonges us. And witethe wel, that in that Contree and in othere Yles there abouten the See is so high that it semethe as though it henge at the Clowdes, and that it wolde covere alle the World; and that is gret Mervaylle, that it myghte be so, saf only the wille of God, that the Eyr susteynethe it. And therfore seyth David in the Psautere, *Mirabiles elationes Maris.*

X.

THE VISION OF WILLIAM CONCERNING PIERS THE PLOWMAN.

PROLOGUS.

In a *sómer séson* · whan *sóft* was the *sónne*,
I *shópe* me in *shróudes* · as I a *shépe* wére,
In *hábits* as an *héremite* · un*hóly* of wórkes,
Went *wýde* in this *wórld* · *wondres* to hére.
Ac on a *Máy mórnyne* · on *Málueme húlles*,
Me by*fél* a *férly* · of *fáiry*, me thoúghte
I was *wéry* for*wándred* · and *wént* me to réste
Under a *bróde bánke* · by a *bórnes síde*,
And as I *láy* and *léned* · and *lóked* in the wáteres,
I *slómbred* in a *slépyng* · it *swéyued* so mérye.
Thanne gan I to meten · a merueilouse sweuene,
That I was in a wildernesse · wist I neuer where;
As I bihelde in to the est · an hiegh to the sonne,
I seigh a toure on a toft · trielich ymaked;
A depe dale binethe · a dongeon there-inne,

With depe dyches and derke · and dredful of sight.
A faire feldeful of folke · fonde I there bytwene,
Of alle maner of men · the mene and the riche,
Worchyng and wandryng · as the worlde asketh.
Some putt hem to the plow · pleyed full selde ;
In settyng and in sowyng · swonken ful harde,
And wonnen that wastours · with glotonye destruyeth.
And some putten hem to pruyde · apparailed hem therafter,
In contenaunce of clothyng · comen disgised.
In prayers and in penaunce · putten hem manye,
Al for loue of owre Lorde · lyveden ful streyte,
In hope for to haue · heueneriche blisse ;
As ancres and heremites · that holden hem in here selles,
And coueiten nought in contre · to kairen about,
For no likerous liflode · her lykam to plese.
And some chosen chaffare · they cheuen the bettere
As it semeth to owre syght · that suche men thryueth ;
And some murthes to make · as mynstralles conneth,
And geten gold with here glee · giltless, I leue.
Ac iapers and iangelers · Iudas chylderen,
Feynen hem fantasies · and foles hem maketh,
And han here witte at wille · to worche yif thei sholde ;
That Poule precheth of hem · I nel nought preue it here ;
Qui turpiloquium loquitur · is Luciferes hyne.
Bidders and beggeres · fast about yede,
With her belies and her bagges · of bred full y-cramned
Fayteden for here fode · foughten atte ale ;
In glotonye, God it wote · gon hij to bedde,
And risen with ribaudye · tho roberdes knaues ;
Slepe and sori sleuthe · serveth hem eure.

[*From this point the spelling is modernized so far as possible, without changing the words or spoiling the metre.*]

Pilgrims and palmers · plighted them together
To seek Saint James · and Saints in Rome.

They went forth on their way · with many wise tales,
And had leave to lie · all their life after.
I saw some that said · they had sought saints:
To each tale that they told · their tongue was tempered to lie
More than to say sooth · it seemed by their speech.
Hermits in a heap · with hooked staves,
Wenten to Walsingham · and their wenches after;
Great lobyes and long · that loth were to swink
Clothed them in copes · to be known from others;
And shopen them hermits · their ease to have.
I found there Friars · all the four orders,
Preached the people · for profit of themselves,
Glosed the gospel · as them good liked,
For coveting of copes · construed it as they would.
Many of these master friars · may clothe them at liking,
For their money and merchandise · marchen together.
For since charity hath been chapman · and achieved to shrive lords,
Many ferlies have befallen · in a few years.
But Holychurch and they · hold better together,
The most mischief on mold · is mounting well fast.
There preached a Pardoner · as he a priest were,
Brought forth a bull · with bishops' seals,
And said [t]hat himself might · assoilen them all
Of falsehood of fasting · of vows ybroken.
Lewd men loved him well · and liked his words,
Comen up kneeling · to kissen his bulls
He banged them with his brevet · and bleared their eyes
And wrought with his ragman · rings and brooches;
Thus they gave their gold · gluttons to keep.
Were the bishop blessed · and worth both his ears
His seal should not be sent · to deceive the people.
Ac it is not by the bishop · that the boy preacheth,
For the parish priest and the pardoner · part the silver

That the poor of the parish · should have, if they were not.
Parsons and parish priests · pleyned them to the bishop,
That their parishes were poor · since the pestilence time
To have a license and a leave · at London to dwell
And sing there for simony · for silver is sweet.
Bishops and bachelors · both masters and doctors
That have cure under Christ · and crowning in token
And sign that they should · shrive their parishioners,
Preach and pray for them · and the poor feed,
Liggen in London · in Lent and else.
Some serven the king · and his silver tell,
In Chequer and Chancery · challenge his debts
Of wards and wardmotes · waifs and strays.
And some serve as servants · lords and ladies
And in stead of stewards · sitten and demen
Their mass and their matins · and many of their hours
Are done undevoutly · dread is at the last
Lest Christ in consistory · accurse full many.

XI.

THE VISION OF WILLIAM CONCERNING PIERS THE PLOWMAN.

Passus V.

The Seven Deadly Sins;—how Gluttony went to church.

Now beginneth Glutton · for to go to shrift,
And kaires him to-kirk-ward · his coupe to shew.
Ac Beton the brewster · bade him good morrow,
And asked of him with that · whitherward he would.
"To holy church" quoth he · "for to hear mass
And since I will be shriven · and sin no more."

"I have good ale, gossip," quoth she · "glutton wilt thou assay?"
"Hast thou aught in thy purse · any hot spices?"
"I have pepper and piones," quoth she, · "and a pound of garlic
A farthingsworth of fennel-seed · for fasting days."
Then goeth Glutton in · and great oaths after;
Cis the souteresse · sat on the bench
Wat the warrener · and his wife both,
Tim the tinker · and twain of his prentices,
Hikke the hackneyman · and Hugh the needler,
Clarice of Cock's Lane · and the clerk of the church
Daw the ditcher · and a dozen other;
Sir Piers of Pridie · and Peronelle of Flanders,
A ribibour, a ratoner · a raker of Chepe,
A roper, a riding-king · and Rose the disheress,
Godfrey of Garlic-hithe · and Griffin the Welsh,
And upholders an heap · early by the morrow,
Give Glutton glad cheer · good ale to handsel.
Clement the cobbler · cast off his cloke
And at the new fair · he named it to sell;
Hikke the hackneyman · hit his hood after,
And bade Bette the butcher · be on his side.
There were chapmen chosen · his chaffer to price;
Whoso haveth the hood · should have amends of the cloke.
Two rise up in rape · and rouned together,
And priced these pennyworths · apart by themselves;
They could not by their conscience · accorden in truth,
Till Robin the roper · was bade for to arise.
And named him for a noumpere · that no debate nere;
For to try this chaffer · betwixen them three.
Hikke the hosteller · had the cloke,
In covenant that Clement · should the cup fill
And have Hikke's hood hosteller · and hold him y-served;
And whoso repented rathest · should arise after,

And greet Sir Glutton · with a gallon ale.
There was laughing and louring · and 'let go the cup'
And they sat so till evensong · and sang somewhile.
Till Glutton had y-globbed · a gallon and a gill.
He might neither step nor stand · ere he his staff had
And then gan he to go · like a gleeman's bitch,
Some time aside · and some time a-rear
As who so layeth lines · for to latch fowls.
And when he drew to the door · then dimmed his eyen
He stumbled on the threshold · and threw to the earth.
Clement the cobbler · caught him by the middle
For to lift him aloft · and laid him on his knees.
With all woe of this world · his wife and his wench
Bare him home to his bed · and brought him therein.
And after his excess · he had an accidie
That he slept Saturday and Sunday · till sun went to rest.
Then waked he of his winking · and wiped his eyen;
The first word that he warpe · was 'where is the bowl?'
His wife gan edwite him · how wickedly he lived,
And repentance right so · rebuked him that time.
[*So he repents and makes good resolves.*]

XII.

PROLOGUE.

CHAUCER.

WHAN that Aprílle with his shourës sote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licóur,
Of which vertú engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swetë breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth

The tendre croppës, and the yongë sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfë cours y-ronne,
And smalë fowlës maken melodyë,
That slepen al the night with open yë,
(So priketh hem natúre in hir coráges):
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
And palmers for to seken straungë strondes
To fernë halwës, couthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shirës ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.

Bifel that, in that seson on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Caunterbury with ful devout coráge,
At night was come in-to that hostelryë
Wel nyne and twenty in a companyë,
Of sondry folk, by áventure y-falle
In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,
That tóward Caunterbury wolden ryde;
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed attë beste.
And shortly, whan the sonnë was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon,
That I was of hir felawshipe anon,
And madë forward erly for to ryse,
To take our wey, ther as I yow devyse.

XIII.

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

CHAUCER.

[*The spelling is modernized so far as is consistent with rhyme and metre.*]

In Syria whylome dwelt a company
Of chapmen rich, and thereto sad and true,
That wyde-where senten their spicery,
Clothës of gold, and satins rich of hue;
Their chaffer was so thrifty and so new,
That every wight hath dainties to chaffare
With them, and eke to sellen them their ware.

Now fell it, that the masters of that sort
Had shapen them to Romë for to wend;
Were it for chapmanhood or for disport,
None other message would they thither send,
But comen themself to Romë, this is th' end,
And in such place as thought them ávantage
For their intent, they take their harbourage.

Sojourned have these merchants in that town
A certain time, as fell to their pleasance,
And so befel, that th' excellent renown
Of th' emperourës daughter, dame Custance,
Reported was with every circumstance,
Unto these Syrian merchants in such wise,
From day to day, as I shall you devise.

This was the common voice of every man:
"Our emperour of Romë, God him see!
A daughter hath, that since the world began
To reckon as well her goodness as beautý
Was never such another as is she.
I pray to God in honour her susteen,
And would she were of all Europe the queen!

In her is high beautý, withouten pride;
Youthë, withouten griefhed or follý;
To all her workës vertu is her guide;
Humblesse hath slain in her all tyranny.
She is the mirror of all courtesy,
Her heart is very chamber of holiness,
Her hand ministre of freedom and almesse."

And all this voice was sooth as God is true.
But now to purpose let us turn again:
These merchants have done fraught their ships anew
And when they have this blissful maiden seen,
Homë to Syria be they went full fain
And done their needës, as they have done yore,
And live in weal, I can you say no more.

Now fell it that these merchants stood in grace
Of him that was the Sowdan of Syrie.
For when they came from any strangë place
He would of his benignë courtesie
Make them good cheer, and busily espie
Tidings of sundry reignës, for to lere
The wordës that they mightë seen and hear.

Amonges other thingës, specially,
These merchants have him told of dame Custánce
So great noblesse in ernest, seriously,
That this Sowdan hath caught so great pleasánce
To have her figure in his rémembrance,
That all his lust, and all his busy cure
Was for to love her while his life may dure.

Peráventure in thilkë largë book,
Which that men clepe the heaven, written was
With starrës, when that he his birthë took,
That he for love should have his death, alas!
For in the starrës, clearer than is glass,
Is written, God wot, who-so could it read,
The death of every man, withouten dread.

In starrës many a winter therebeforn
Was writ the death of Hector, Achilles,
Of Pompey, Julius, ere they were born,
The strife of Thebës, and of Hercules,
Of Samson, Turnus, and of Socrates
The death: but mennës wittës be so dull,
That no wight can well read it at the full.

This Sowdan for his privy council sent,
And shortly of this matter for to pace,
He hath to them declared his intent,
And said them certain, but he might have grace
To have Custance within a little space,
He was but dead, and charged them in hye
To shapen for his life some remedy.

Diversë men diversë thingës said,
The argumentës casten up and down;
Many a subtle reason forth they laid;
They speak of magic and abusión,
But finally, as in conclusión,
They cannot see in that no avantáge
Nor in none other way, save marriáge.

Then saw they therein such difficultie,
By way of reason, for to speak all plain,
Because that there was such diversitie
Between their bothë lawës, that they sayn,
They trowë that "no Christian prince would fain
Wedden his child under our lawës sweetë,
That us were taught by Mahoun, our prophete."

And he answerdë "Rather than I lose
Custance, I will be Christian doubteless.
I must be hers, I may none other choose
I pray you hold your arguments in peace,
Save ye my life and be not reckëless.
Go, get ye her that hath my life in cure,
For in this woe I may no longer dure."

What needeth greater dilatatión?
I say, by treaties and ambassadry,
And by the Popës mediatión,
And all the church and all the chivalry,
That in destruction of Mahometry
And in increase of Christës lawë dear
They be agreed as ye shall after hear.

How that the Sowdan and his baronage
And all his lieges should y-christened be,
And he shall have Custance in marriage,
And certain gold, I nōt what quantity,
And hereto found they súffisant surety.
This same accord was sworn on every side;
Now, fair Custance, Almighty God thee guide!

Now wouldë some men waiten, as I guess,
That I should tellen all the purveyance
That th' emperor of his greatë noblesse,
Hath shapen for his daughter dame Custance.
Well may men know that so great ordinance
May no man tellen in a little clause
As was arrayéd for so high a cause.

Bishops be shapen with her for to wend,
Lords, ladiës and knightës of renown,
And other folk enough, this is the end.
And notifiéd is throughout the town,
That every wight with great devotioun,
Should prayen Christ, that he this marriáge
Receive in gree, and speedë this voyáge.

The day is comen of their départing
(I say the woeful day fatal is come)
That there may be no longer tarrying,
But forthëward they dress them all and some.
Custance that is with sorrow overcome,
Full pale arose, and dresseth her to wend,
For well she saw there was none other end.

Alas! what wonder is it though she wept,
That shall be sent to a strange natión
From friendës, that so tenderly her kept,
And to be bounden under subjection
Of one she knoweth not his condition?
Husbandës be all good and have been yore,
That knowen wives!—I dare say you no more.

"Father," she said, "thy wretched child Custance,
Thy youngë daughter, fostered up so soft,
And ye my mother, my sovereign plesance
Over all things, out-taken Christ aloft,
Custance, your child, her recommendeth oft
Unto your grace; for I shall to Syrië
Nor shall I never see you more with eyë.

"Alas! unto the barbarous natión
I mustë gon, since that it is your will:
But Christ, that starf for our salvatión
So give me grace his hestës to fulfil.
I, wretched woman, no force though I spill!
Women be born to thraldom and penánce
And to be under mannës governánce."

* * * * *

To ship is brought this woeful fairë maid
Solempnëly with every circumstance.
"Now Jesu Christ be with you all," she said,
"There is no more but—farewell, fair Custance!"
She paineth her to make good countenance.
And forth I let her sail in this mannér,
And turn I will again to my mattér.

The mother of the Sowdan, well of vices,
Espiéd hath her sonës plain intent,
How he will let his oldë sacrifices;
And right anon she for her council sent,
And they be come, to knowë what she meant;
And when assembled was this folk in fere
She sat her down and said as ye shall hear.

"Lordës," quoth she, "ye knowen every one,
How that my son in point is for to let
The holy lawës of our Alkaroun,
Given by Godës message Máhomet,
But one avow to greatë God I het,
The life should rather out of my body start
Than Máhometës law out of mine heart.

"What shall betide us of this newë law
But thraldrom to our bodies and penánce
And afterward in hellë to be draw,
For we reniëd Mahound our creánce?
But lordës, will ye maken assuránce,
As I shall say, assenting to my lore?
And I shall make us safe for ever more."

They sworen and assenten every man
To live with her and die, and by her stand;
And every in the bestë wise he can
To strengthen her shall all his friendës fond;
And she hath this emprise taken in hond
Which ye shall hearën that I shall devise,
And to them allë spake she in this wise:

"We shall first feign us Christendom to take;
Cold water shall not grieve us but a lyte;
And I shall such a feast and revel make,
That, as I trow, I shall the Sowdan quite.
For though his wife he christened never so white,
She shall have need to wash away the red,
Though she a font-full water with her led."

O Sowdaness, root of iniquity!
Virago thou, Semíram the secound;
O serpent under femininity,
Like to the serpent deep in hell y-bound!
O feignéd woman, all that may confound
Virtue and innocence, through thy malice,
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice!

O Satan envious, since thilkë day
That thou wert chaséd from our heritage,
Well knewest thou to women the old way,
Thou madest Eva bring us in servage,
Thou wilt fordo this christian marriage,
Thine instrument so (weylaway the while!)
Makest thou of women when thou wilt beguile.

This Sowdaness whom thus I blame and wary,
Let privily her counsel go their way;
What should I in this talë longer tarry?
She rideth to the Sowdan on a day,
And said him, that she would reny her lay,
And christendom of priestës handës fong,
Repenting her she heathen was so long.

Beseeching him to do her that honoúr,
That she might have the christian men to feast;
"To pleasen them I will do my laboúr."
The Sowdan saith: "I will do at your hest;"
And kneeling thanketh her of that request;
So glad he was, he nist not what to say.
She kissed her son and home she goeth her way.

Explicit prima pars. Sequitur pars secunda.

Arrived be this christian folk to land
In Syria, with a great solempnë rout,
And hastily this Sowdan sent his sond,
First to his mother, and all the reign about,
And said his wife was comen out of doubt,
And prayeth her to ride against the queen
The honour of his reignë to susteen.

Great was the press, and richë was the array
Of Syrians and Romans met in fere,
The mother of the Sowdan rich and gay
Received her with all so glad a cheer,
As any mother might her daughter dear:
And to the nextë city there beside
A softë pace solempnely they ride.

Naught trow I the triúmph of Julius,
Of which that Lucan maketh muchë boast,
Was royaller, nor morë curious,
Than was the assembly of this blissful host.
But-ë this scorpion, this wicked ghost,
The Sowdaness, for all her flattering,
Cast under this full mortally to sting.

The Sowdan comth himself soon after this
So royally that wonder is to tell;
And welcometh her with all joy and bliss.
And thus in mirth and joy I let them dwell.
The fruit of this mattér is that I tell.
When timë came men thought it for the best
That revel stint, and men go to their rest.

The timë came, the oldë Sowdaness
Ordained had this feast of which I told;
And to the feastë christian folk them dress
In general, yea, bothë young and old.
There men may feast and royalty behold,
And dainties more than I can you devise,
But all too dear they bought it ere they rise.

O sudden woe, that ever art successour
To worldly bliss! Spreynd is with bitterness
Th' end of the joy of our worldlý labour,
Woe occupieth the fyn of our gladness.
Hearken this counsel for thy sikerness,
Upon thy gladdë days have in thy mind
The unware woe or harm that comth behind.

For shortly for to tellen at a word
The Sowdan and the Christians every one
Be all to-hewn and stickéd at the board,
But it were only dame Custance alone.
This olde Sowdaness, this curséd crone,
Hath with her friendés, done this cursed deed,
For she herself would all the country lead.

Nor was there Syrian none, that was converted,
That of the counsel of the Sowdan wot,
But he was all to-hewn ere he asterted;
And Custance have they take anon foot-hot,
And in a shippe all steerëless, God wot,
They have her set and bade her learn to sail
Out of Syrie againward to Itaile.

A certain treasure that she thither led
And sooth to say victuals in great plenty
They have her given, and clothës eke she had,
And forth she saileth in the saltë sea.
O my Custance, full of benignity,
O emperourës youngë daughter dear
He that is lord of fortune be thy steer!

She blesseth her, and with full piteous voice
Unto the cross of Christ thus saidë she;
"O clear, o wellful altar, holy cross,
Red of the Lambës blood, full of pitie,
That wash'd the world from th' old iniquitie,
Me from the fiend and from his clawës keep
That day that I shall drenchen in the deep."

Yearës and dayës fled this creäture
Throughout the sea of Greece, into the strait
Of Marrok, as it was her áventure.
On many a sorry meal now may she bait,
After her death full often must she wait,
Ere that the wildë wavë will her drive
Unto the place thereas she shall arrive.

Men mighten asken, why she was not slain?
Eke at the feast who might her body save?
And I answer to that demand again,
Who savéd Daniel in the horrible cave,
That every wight, save he, master or knave,
Was with the lion frete, ere he astert?
No wight but God, that he bare in his heart.

She driveth forth into our ocean
Throughout our wildë sea, till at the last,
Under an hold that namen I ne can,
Far in Northumberland the wave her cast,
And in the sand her ship stickéd so fast,
That thenës would it not of all a tide,
The will of Christ was that she should abide.

The constable of the castle down is fare
To see this wreck, and all the ship he sought,
And found this weary woman full of care;
He found also the treasure that she brought.
In her languagë mercy she besought
The life out of her body for to twin
Her to deliver of woe that she was in.

A manner Latin córrupt was her speech
But algates thereby was she understand.
The constable, when him list no longer seche,
This woeful woman brought he to the land;
She kneeleth down and thanketh Godës sond
But what she was she wouldë no man say,
For foul nor fair, though that she shouldë die.

She said, she was so mazed in the sea
That she forgat her mindë, by her truth.
The constable hath of her so great pitie,
And eke his wife, that they weepen for ruth.
She was so diligent, withouten sloth,
To serve and pleasen every in that place
That all her loved that lookéd on her face.

This constable and dame Hermengild his wife
Were pagans, and that country everywhere;
But Hermengild loved her right as her life,
And Custance hath so long sojournéd there,
In orisons with many a bitter tear,
Till Jesu hath converted through his grace
Dame Hermengild, constabless of that place.

In all that land no christian durstë rout;
All christian folk be fled from that countrie
Through pagans that conquereden all about
The plages of the North, by land and sea;
To Walës fled the christianity
Of oldë Britons, dwelling in this isle;
There was their refuge for the meanëwhile.

But yet nere christian Britons so exiled
But there were some that in their privity
Honouréd Christ, and heathen folk beguiled:
And nigh the castle such there dwelten three.
That one of them was blind and might not see
But it were with those eyen of his mind,
With whichë men see, when that they be blind

Bright was the sun as in that summers day
For which the constable and his wife also
And Custance had taken the rightë way
Toward the sea, a furlong way or two,
To playen and to roamen to and fro;
And in their walk this blindë man they met
Crooked and old, with eyen fast y-shet.

"In name of Christ," criéd this blind Britoún,
"Dame Hermengild, give me my sight again."
The lady waxed affrayed of the sound,
Lest that her husband, shortly for to sayn,
Would her for Jesu Christës love have slain,
Till Custance made her bold, and bade her work
The will of Christ, as daughter of His kirk.

The constable waxed abashéd of that sight,
And saidë "what amounteth all this fare?"
Custance answered, "sire, it is Christës might
That helpeth folk out of the fiendës snare."
And so far forth she gan our lay declare,
That she the constable, ere that it were eve,
Converted and on Christ made him believe.

This constable was nothing lord of this place,
Of which I speakë, there he Custance found,
But kept it strongly, many winters' space,
Under Alla, king of all Northumberland,
That was full wise, and worthy of his hand
Against the Scottës, as men may well hear,
But turn I will again to my mattere.

Satan that ever us waiteth to beguile
Saw of Custance all her perfectioun
And cast anon how he might quite her while.
And made a young knight that dwelt in the town
Love her so hot of foul affectioun,
That verily him thoughtë he should spill
But he of her might onës have his will.

He wooeth her, but it availeth naught,
She wouldë do no sin, by any way;
And for despite he compasseth in his thought
To maken her in shameful death to die.
He waiteth when the constable was away,
And privily upon a night he crept
In Hermengildës chamber while she slept.

Weary, forwaked in her orisons,
Sleepeth Custance, and Hermengild also.
This knight through Satanas' temptations
All softëly is to the bed y-go,
And cut the throat of Hermengild atwo,
And laid the bloody knife by dame Custance,
And went his way, where God give him mischance!

Soon after com'th this constable home again
And eke Alla, that king was of that land,
And saw his wife despitously y-slain,
For which full oft he wept and wrung his hand,
And in the bed the bloody knife he found
By dame Custance; alas! what might she say?
For very woe her wit was all away.

To king Alla was told all this mischance
And eke the time and where and in what wise
That in a ship was founden dame Custance,
As herebefore that ye have heard devise.
The kingës heart of pity gan agryse,
When he saw so benign a creäture
Fall'n in disease and in misáventure.

For as the lamb toward his death is brought,
So stood this innocent before the king;
This falsë knight that hath this treason wrought
Bear'th her in hand that she hath done this thing.
But nathëless there was great murmuring
Among the people, and say they cannot guess
That she hath done so great a wickedness.

For they have seen her ever so virtuous
And loving Hermengild right as her life.
Of this bare witness every in that house,
Save he that Hermengild slew with his knife.
This gentle king hath caught a great motyf
Of this witness, and thought he would enquire
Deeper in this a truthë for to lere.

Alas! Custance thou hast no champión
Nor fightë canst thou not, so wellaway!
But he that starf for our redemptión
And bound Satan (and yet lieth where he lay)
So be thy strongë champion this day!
For, but if Christ open mirácle kythe,
Withouten guilt thou shalt be slain as swythe.

She set her down on knees, and thus she said:
"Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
From falsë blame, and thou, mercyful maid,
Mary, I meanë, daughter to Saint Anne,
Before whose child angelës sing Hosanne,
If I be guiltless of this felony
My succour be; for ellës I shall die."

Have ye not seen some time a palë face,
Among a press, of him that hath been led
Toward his death, whereas he got no grace,
And such a colour in his face hath had,
Men mightë know his face, that was bestead
Amonges all the faces in that rout?
So stands Custance, and looketh her about.

O queenës, living in prosperity,
Duchesses, and ladiës every one,
Have ye some ruth on her adversity;
An emperourë's daughter stands alone;
She hath no wight to whom to make her moan.
O blood royal! that standest in this dread,
Far be thy friendës at thy greatë need!

This Alla king hath such compassioun,
As gentle heart is fulfilled of pitie,
That from his eyen ran the water down.
"Now hastily do fetch a book," quoth he,
"And if this knight will swearen how that she
This woman slew, yet will we us advise
Whom that we will that shall be our justise."

A Briton book written with Evangiles
  Was fetched, and on this book he swore anon,
She guilty was, and in the meanëwhiles
  A hand him smote upon the neckëbone,
  That down he fell at onës as a stone,
And both his eyen brast out of his face
In sight of every body in that place.

A voice was heard in general audience,
  And said "Thou hast disclaundered guiltëless
The daughter of holy church in high presence;
  Thus hast thou done, and yet I held my peace."
  Of this marvél, aghast was all the press;
As mazed folk they stooden everyone,
For dread of wrechë, save Custance alone.

Great was the dread and eke the répentance
  Of them that hadden wrong suspición
Upon this sely innocent Custance;
  And for this miracle in conclusión,
  And by Custance's mediatión
The king and many another in that place
Converted was, thankéd be Christës grace.

This falsë knight was slain for his untruth
  By judgëment of Alla hastily;
And yet Custance had of his death great ruth.
  And after this Jesus, of his mercý,
  Made Alla wedden full solempnely
This holy maid, that is so bright and sheen
And thus hath Christ y-made Custance a queen.

But who was woeful, if I shall not lie,
Of this wedding but Donegild, and no mo,
The kingës mother full of tyranny?
Her thought her cursed heartë brast atwo;
She wouldë not her sonë had done so;
Her thought a despite, that he shouldë take
So strange a creäture unto his make.

Me list not of the chaff nor of the stree
Maken so long a tale, as of the corn.
What should I tellen of the royalty
At marriage, or which course goeth beforn,
Who bloweth on a trump or on an horn?
The fruit of every tale is for to say:
They eat and drink and dance and sing and play.

* * * * *

[*King Alla goes to war in Scotland, leaving Custance, his wife, in the charge of his Constable.*]

The time is come, a knavë child she bare;
Mauricius at the fontstone they him call;
This Constable doth forth come a messengér
And wrote unto his king that clept was Alle,
How that this blissful tiding is befall,
And other tidings speedful for to say;
He takes the letter and forth goes his way.

This messenger to do his ávantage
Unto the kingës mother rideth swythe,
Saluteth her full fair in his languáge.
"Madame," quoth he, "ye may be glad and blithe
And thanke God an hundred thousand sythe;
My lady queen hath child withouten doubt
To joy and bliss of all this reign about."

Lo, here the letters sealed of this thing,
That I must bear with all the haste I may:
If ye will aught unto your son the king,
I am your servant bothë night and day."
Donegild answer'd "as now at this time, nay;
But here all night I will thou take thy rest,
To-morrow will I say thee what me list."

This messenger drank sadly ale and wine,
And stolen were his letters privily
Out of his box while he slept as a swine;
And counterfeited was full subtlely
Another letter, wrought full sinfully,
Unto the king direct of this mattér
From his Constable, as ye shall after hear.

The letter spake, the queen delivered was
Of so horríble a fiendly creäture,
That in the castle none so hardy was
That any whilë durstë there endure.
The mother was an elf, by áventure
Y-come, by charmës or by sorcery
And every wight hateth her company.

Woe was this king when he this lettre had seen,
But to no wight he told his sorrows sore,
But of his owen hand he wrote again,
"Welcome the sond of Christ for evermore
To me, that am now learnéd in his lore;
Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy pleasance;
My lust I put all in thine ordinance!

"Keepeth this child, albeit foul or fair,
And eke my wife unto mine home-coming;
Christ, when him list, may sendë me an heir
More ágreable than this to my liking."
This lettre he sealeth, privily weeping,
Which to the messenger was taken soon,
And forth he goeth; there is no more to doen.

O messenger, fulfilled of drunkeness,
Strong is thy breath, thy limbës falter aye
And thou bewrayest allë secretness;
Thy mind is lorn, thou janglest as a jay,
Thy face is turnéd in a new array!
Where drunkeness reigneth in any rout
There is no counsel hid, withouten doubt.

O Donegild, I ne have none English dign
Unto thy malice and thy tyranny!
And therefore to the fiend I thee resign
Let him inditen of thy traitory!
Fie, mannish, fie!—o, nay, parfay, I lie,
Fie, *fiendly* spirit, for I dare well tell,
Though thou here walk, thy spirit is in hell!

This messenger comth from the king again,
And at the kingës mother's court he light,
And she was of this messenger full fain,
And pleased him in all that e'er she might.
He drank and well his girdle underpight.
He sleepeth and he snoreth in his guise
All night until the sonnë gan arise.

Eft were his letters stolen every one
And counterfeited letters in this wise,
"The king commandeth his Constable anon
On pain of hanging and of high justice
That he ne shouldë sufferen in no wise
Custance within his reign for to abide
Three dayës and a quarter of a tide;

"But in the samë ship as he her found
Her and her youngë son and all her gear
He shouldë put, and crowd her from the land,
And charge her that she never eft come there."
O my Custance, well may thy ghost have fear
And sleeping in thy dream be in penance,
When Donegild cast all this ordinance!

This messenger on morrow, when he woke
Unto the castle took the nearest way,
And to the Constable he the letter took;
And when that he this piteous letter sey.
Full oft he said "alas!" and "weylawey!"
"Lord Christ," quoth he, "how may this world endure?
So full of sin is many a creäture.

"O mighty God, if that it be thy will,
Sith thou art rightful judge, how may it be
That thou wilt sufferen innocents to spill,
And wicked folk reign in prosperity?
O good Custance, alas! so woe is me
That I must be thy tórmentor, or die
In shameful death, there is none other way!"

Weepen both young and old in all that place,
When that the king this curséd letter sent,
And Custance with a deadly palë face
The fourthë day toward her ship she went.
But nathless she taketh in good intent
The will of Christ and kneeling on the stronde
She saidë "Lord! aye welcome be thy sonde!

"He that me keptë from the falsë blame
While I was on the land amongest you,
He can me keep from harm and eke from shame
In saltë sea, although I see not how.
As strong as ever he was he is yet now.
In him trust I and in his mother dear
That is to me my sail and eke my steer."

Her little child lay weeping in her arm,
And kneeling piteously to him she said,
"Peace, little son, I will do thee no harm."
With that her kerchief off her head she breyd
And o'er his little eyen she it laid;
And in her arm she lulleth it full fast
And into heaven her eyen up she cast.

"Mother," quoth she, "and maidë bright, Marye,
Sooth is that through womanës eggëment
Mankind was lorn and damnéd aye to die,
For which thy child was on a cross y-rent;
Thy blissful eyen saw all his torment;
Then is there no comparison between
Thy woe and any woe man may sustain.

"Thou saw'st thy child y-slain before thine eyen
And yet now liveth my little child, parfay!
Now, lady bright, to whom all woeful cryen,
Thou glory of womanhood, thou fairë may,
Thou haven of refúge, bright star of day.
Rue on my child that of thy gentleness
Ruest on every rueful in distress!

"O little child, alas! what is thy guilt
That never wroughtest sin as yet, pardé,
Why will thine hardë father have thee spilt?
O mercy dearë Constable!" quoth she;
"As let my little child dwell here with thee;
And if thou darest not saven him, for blame,
So kiss him onës in his father's name."

Therewith she looketh backward to the land
And saidë "Farewell, husband rutheless!"
And up she rose and walketh down the strand
Toward the ship; her followeth all the press,
And ever she prayeth her child to hold his peace;
And taketh her leave, and with an holy intent
She blesseth her; and into ship she went.

Victualléd was the ship, it is no dread,
Abundantly for full her longë space,
And other necessaries that should need
She had enough, heried be Godës grace!
For wind and weather almighty God purchase
And bring her home! I can no better say;
But in the sea she driveth forth her way.

Explicit secunda pars, sequitur pars tercia.

Alla the king cometh home, soon after this,
Unto his castle of the which I told,
And asketh where his wife and his child is.
The Constable went about his heartë cold,
And plainly all the manner he him told
As ye have heard, I can tell it no better,
And showeth the king his seal and eke his letter.

And saidë "Lord, as ye commanded me,
Up pain of death, so have I done certaín."
This messenger tormented was till he
Mustë beknow and tellen plat and plain,
From night to night in what place he had lain
And thus by wit and subtle inquiring
Imagined was by whom this harm gan spring.

The hand was knowen that the letter wrote,
And all the venom of this cursed deed,
But in what wisë certainly I nōt.
Th' effect is this, that Alla, out of dread,
His mother slew, that men may plainly read,
For that she traitor was to her liegance.
Thus endeth oldë Donegild with mischance.

The sorrow that this Alla night and day
Maketh for his wife and for his child alsó
There is no tonguë that it tellë may.
But now will I unto Custancë go
That floateth in the sea, in pain and woe,
Five year and more, as liked Christës sond,
Ere that her ship approached unto land.

* * * * *

Forth goeth her ship throughout the narrow mouth
Of Jubaltar and Septë, driving aye,
Sometimë West, and sometime North and South,
And sometime East, full many a weary day
Till Christës mother (blessed be she aye!),
Hath shapen through her endëless goodness
To make an end of all her heaviness.

Now let us stint of Custance but a throw,
And speak we of the Roman emperour
That out of Syria hath by letters know
The slaughter of christian folk and dishonoúr
Done to his daughter by a false traitour,
I mean the cursed wicked Sowdaness,
That at the feast let slay both more and less.

For which this emperor hath sent anon
His senator with royal ordinance,
And other lordës, God wot, many one,
On Syrians to taken high vengeánce.
They burn and slay and bring them to mischance
Full many a day; but shortly this is th' end
Homeward to Rome they shapen them to wend.

This senator repaireth with victóry
To Romëward, sailing full royally,
And met the ship driving, as saith the story,
In which Custancë sat full piteously.
Nothing ne knew he what she was, nor why
She was in such array; nor will she say
Of her estate, although she shouldë die.

He bringeth her to Rome, and to his wife
He gave her and her youngë son also;
And with the senator she led her life.
Thus can Our Lady bringen out of woe
Woeful Custance, and many another mo.
And longë timë dwelt she in that place,
In holy workës ever, as was her grace.

The senatourës wife her auntë was,
But for all that she knew her ne'er the more;
I will no longer tarry in this case,
But to king Alla, which I spake of yore,
That for his wife weepeth and sigheth sore,
I will return, and leave I will Custance
Under the senatourës governance.

King Alla, which that had his mother slain,
Upon a day fell in such répentance,
That, if I shortly tellen shall and plain,
To Rome he cometh, to receive penance
And put him in the Popës ordinance
In high and low, and Jesu Christ besought
Forgive his wicked workës that he wrought.

The fame anon through Romë town is borne,
How Alla king shall come in pilgrimage,
By harbingers that wenten him beforn;
For which the senator, as was usage,
Rode him against and many of his lineage,
As well to show his high magnificence
As to do any king a reverence.

Great cheerë doth this noble senatour
To king Alla, and he to him also;
Every of them doth other great honour;
And so befel that in a day or two,
This senator is to king Alla go
To feast, and shortly, if I shall not lie,
Custance's son went in his company.

Some men would say at réquest of Custance
This senator hath led this child to feast;
I may not tellen every circumstance,
Be as he may, there was he at the least.
But sooth is this that at his mother's hest,
Before Alla, during the meatës space
The child stood, looking in the Kingës face.

This Alla king hath of this child great wonder
And to the senator he said anon,
"Whose is that faire child that standeth yonder?"
"I nōt" quoth he "parfay and by Saint John!
A mother he hath, but father hath he none
That I of wot"—but shortly in a stound
He told Alla how that this child was found.

Now was this child as like unto Custance
As possible is a creäture to be.
This Alla hath the face in remembrance
Of dame Custance, and thereon mused he
If that the childës mother were aught she
That was his wife, and privily he sighed,
And sped him from the table that he might.

"Parfay," thought he, "phantom is in my head!
I oughtë deem, of skillful judgëment,
That in the saltë sea my wife is dead."
And afterward he made his argument—
"What wot I, if that Christ hath hither sent
My wife by sea, as well as he her sent
To my countrie from thennës that she went?"

And after noon home with the senatour
Goeth Alla, for to see this wonder chance.
This senator doth Alla great honour,
And hastily he sent after Custance.
But trust ye well her listë not to dance
When that she wistë wherefore was that sond.
Unnethe upon her feet she mightë stand.

When Alla saw his wife, fair he her gret,
And wept, that it was ruthë for to see.
For at the firstë look he on her set
He knew well verily that it was she.
And she for sorrow as dumb stood as a tree;
So was her heartë shut in her distress
When she remembered his unkindëness.

Twiës she swoonëd in his owën sight;
He wept and him excuseth piteously:
"Now God," quoth he, "and all his hallows bright
So wisely on my soul as have mercy,
That of your harm as guiltëless am I,
As is Maurice my son so like your face;
Elles the fiend me fetch out of this place."

Long was the sobbing and the bitter pain
  Ere that their woeful heartës mightë cease ;
Great was the pity for to hear them plain
  Through whichë plaintës gan her woe increase.
  I pray you all my labour to release ;
I may not tell her woe until tomorrow
I am so weary for to speak of sorrow.

But finally, when that the sooth is wist
  That Alla guiltëless was of her woe,
I trow an hundred timës be they kissed
  And such a bliss is there betwixt them two
  That, save the Joy that lasteth evermo'
There is none like that any creäture
Hath seen or shall, while that the world may dure.

Then prayed she her husband meekëly
  In rélief of her longë piteous pine,
That he would pray her father specially
  That of his majesty he would incline
  To vouchësafe some day with him to dine ;
She prayed him eke he shouldë by no way
Unto her father no word of her say.

Some men would say, how that the child Maurice
  Doth this message unto this emperour.
But, as I guess, Alla was not so nice
  To him that was of so sovereign honour
  As he that is of christian folk the flow'r,
To send a child : but it is best to deem
He went himself and so it well may seem.

This emperour hath granted gentilly
To come to dinner as he him besought;
And, well read I, he lookéd busily
Upon this child, and on his daughter thought.
Alla goeth to his inn and, as him ought,
Arrayéd for this feast in every wise
As farforth as his cunning may suffice.

The morrow came and Alla gan him dress
And eke his wife, this emperour to meet;
And forth they ride in joy and in gladness.
And when she saw her father in the street,
She lighted down and falleth him to feet.
"Father," quoth she, "your youngë child Custance
Is now full clean out of your remembrance.

"I am your daughter Custancë" quoth she,
"That whilome ye have sent unto Syrie.
It am I, father, that in the saltë sea
Was put alone and damnéd for to die.
Now, goodë father, mercy I you cry,
Send me no more unto none heathenness
But thanketh my lord here of his kindness."

Who can the piteous joyë tellen all
Betwixt them three, since they be thus y-met?
But of my talë make an end I shall;
The day goeth fast, I will no longer let.
This gladë folk to dinner they them set;
In joy and bliss at meat I let them dwell
A thousand fold well more than I can tell.

* * * * *

In virtue and in holy almës-deed
They liven all, and never asunder wend;
Till death departed them, this life they led.
And fare now well, my tale is at an end.
Now Jesu Christ, that of his might may send
Joy after woe, govern us in his grace
And keep us allë that be in this place! Amen.

Here endeth the tale of the man of lawe.

XIV.

LAMENT FOR CHAUCER.

THOMAS OCCLEVE.

ALLAS! my worthy maister honorable,
This londes verray tresour and richesse!
Dethe by thy dethe hath harm irreparable
Unto us done: hir vengeable duresse
Despoiled hath this lond of the swetnesse
Of rethoryk; for unto Tullius
Was never man so like amonges us.

Also who was heyr in philosofye
To Aristotle in our tunge but thou?
The steppes of Virgile in poesye
Thou folwedst eke, men wotë wel ynow.
That combre-worldë, that my maister slow—
Wolde I slayn werë!—Dethe was so hastyf
To renne on thee and revë thee thy lyf . . .

She might han tarried hir vengeance a whyle
Til that some man had egal to thee be;
Nay, let be that! She knew wel that this yle
May never man bring forth likë to thee,
And hir office nedës do motë she;
God bade hir so, I trustë, for the beste;
O maister, maister, God thy sowlë reste.

XV.

THE KINGIS QUAIR.

Bewailing In my chamber thus allone,
Despeired of all Ioye and remedye,
For-tirit of my thoght, and wo begone,
Unto the wyndow gan I walk In hye,
To se the warld and folk that went forby;
As for the tyme, though I of mirthis fude
Myght haue no more, to luke It did me gude.

Now was there maid fast by the touris wall
A gardyn faire, and in corneris set
Ane herbere grene, with wandis long and small
Railit about; and so with treis set
Was all the place, and hawthorn hegis knet,
That lyf was non walking there forby,
That myght within scarse ony wight aspye.

So thik the bewis and the leuës grene
Beschadit all the aleyes that there were,
And myddis euery herbere myght be sene
The scharpë grenë suetë Ienepere,
Growing so faire with branchis here and there,
That, as It semyt to a lyf without,
The bewis spred the herbere all about.

And on the smallë grenë twistis sat
The lytill suetë nyghtingale, and song
So loud and clere, the ympnis consecrat
Off lufis vse, now soft, now lowd among,
That all the gardyng and the wallis rong
Ryght of thaire song, and on the copill next
Off thaire suete armony, and lo the text:

Cantus.

"Worsehippë ȝe that loueris bene this may,
For of ȝour blisse the kalendis are begonne,
And sing with vs, away, winter, away!
Cum, somer, cum, the suete sesoun and sonne!
Awake for schame! that haue ȝour hevynnis wonne,
And amorously lift vp ȝour hedis all,
Thank lufe that list you to his merci call."

* * * * *

And there-with kest I doun myn eye ageyne,
Quhare as I sawe, walking vnder the toure,
Full secretly new cummyn hir to pleyne,
The fairest or the freschest ȝongë floure
That euer I sawe, me thoght, before that houre,
For quhich sodayn abate, anon astert
The blude of all my body to my hert.

And though I stude abaisit tho a lyte,
No wonder was; for-quhy my wittis all
Were so ouercom with plesance and delyte,
Onely throu latting of myn eyën fall,
That sudaynly my hert became hir thrall,
For euer, of free wyll; for of manace
There was no takyn In hir suetë face.

And In my hede I drewe ryght hastily,
And eft-sonës I lent It forth ageyne,
And sawe hir walk, that verray womanly,
With no wight mo, bot onely wommen tueyne.
Than gan I studye in my-self and seyne,
"A! suete, ar ȝe a warldly creature,
Or hevinly thing in likenesse of nature?"

XVI.

THE NUT-BROWN MAID.

HE.

BE it right or wrong, these men among
On women do complain;
Affirming this, how that it is
A labour spent in vain
To love them wele; for never a dele
They love a man again:
For let a man do what he can
Their favour to attain,
Yet if a new to them pursue,
Their first true lover than
Laboureth for naught; and from her thought
He is a banished man.

SHE.

I say not nay, but that all day
It is both writ and said
That woman's faith is, as who saith,
All utterly decay'd:
But nevertheless, right good witnéss
In this case might be laid
That they love true and continúe:
Record the Nut-brown Maid,
Which, from her love, when her to prove
He came to make his moan,
Would not depart; for in her heart
She loved but him alone.

HE.

Then between us let us discuss
  What was all the manere
Between them two: we will also
  Tell all the pain in fere
That she was in. Now I begin
  So that ye me answere:
Whereforë ye that present be,
  I pray you, give an ear.
I am the knight, I come by night,
  As secret as I can,
Saying, Alas! thus standeth the case,
  I am a banished man.

SHE.

And I your will for to fulfil
  In this will not refuse;
Trusting to show, in wordes few,
  That men have an ill use—
To their own shame—women to blame,
  And causeless them accuse.
Therefore to you I answer now
  All women to excuse—
Mine own heart dear, with you what cheer?
  I pray you, tell anone;
For in my mind, of all mankind
  I love but you alone.

HE.

It standeth so: a deed is do
  Whereof much harm shall grow:
My destiny is for to die
  A shameful death, I trow;
Or else to flee. The t' one must be.
  None other way I know

But to withdraw as an outláw,
And take me to my bow.
Wherefore adieu, mine own heart true!
None other rede I can:
For I must to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

O Lord, what is this worldis bliss,
That changeth as the moon!
My summer's day in lusty May
Is darked before the noon.
I hear you say, farewell: Nay, nay,
We départ not so soon.
Why say ye so? whither will ye go?
Alas! what have ye done?
All my welfáre to sorrow and care
Should change, if ye were gone:
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone

HE.

I can believe it shall you grieve,
And somewhat you distrain;
But afterward, your paines hard
Within a day or twain
Shall soon aslake; and ye shall take
Comfort to you again.
Why should ye nought? for, to make thought,
Your labour were in vain.
And thus I do; and pray you, loo,
As heartily as I can:
For I must to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

Now, sith that ye have showed to me
  The secret of your mind,
I shall be plain to you again,
  Like as ye shall me find.
Sith it is so that ye will go,
  I will not live behind.
Shall never be said the Nut-brown Maid
  Was to her love unkind.
Make you ready, for so am I,
  Although it were anone:
For, in my mind, of all mankind
  I love but you alone.

HE.

Yet I you rede to take good heed
  What men will think and say:
Of young, of old, it shall be told
  That ye be gone away
Your wanton will for to fulfil,
  In green-wood you to play;
And that ye might for your delight
  No longer make delay.
Rather than ye should thus for me
  Be called an ill woman
Yet would I to the green-wood go,
  Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

Though it be sung of old and young
  That I should be to blame,
Theirs be the charge that speak so large
  In hurting of my name:
For I will prove that faithful love
  It is devoid of shame;

In your distress and heaviness
To part with you the same:
And sure all tho that do not so
True lovers are they none:
For in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

HE.

I counsel you, Remember how
It is no maiden's law
Nothing to doubt, but to run out
To wood with an outlaw,
For ye must there in your hand bear
A bow ready to draw;
And as a thief thus must you live
Ever in dread and awe;
By which to you great harm might grow:
Yet had I liever than
That I had to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

I think not nay but as ye say;
It is no maiden's lore;
But love may make me for your sake,
As ye have said before,
To come on foot, to hunt and shoot,
To get us meat and store;
For so that I your company
May have, I ask no more.
From which to part it maketh my heart
As cold as any stone;
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

HE.

For an outláw this is the law,
That men him take and bind;
Without pitie, hangéd to be,
And waver with the wind.
If I had need (as God forbede!)
What rescue could ye find?
Forsooth I trow, you and your bow
Should draw for fear behind.
And no mervail; for little avail
Were in your counsel than:
Wherefore I'll to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

Full well know ye that women be
Full feeble for to fight;
No womanhede it is, indeed,
To be bold as a knight:
Yet in such fear if that ye were
With enemies day and night,
I would withstand, with bow in hand,
To grieve them as I might,
And you to save; as women have
From death men many one:
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

HE.

Yet take good hede; for ever I drede
That ye could not sustain
The thorny ways, the deep valléys,
The snow, the frost, the rain,
The cold, the heat; for dry or wete,
We must lodge on the plain;

And, us above, no other roof
But a brake bush or twain:
Which soon should grieve you, I believe;
And ye would gladly than
That I had to the green-wood go
Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

Sith I have here been partynere
With you of joy and bliss,
I must alsó part of your woe
Endure, as reason is:
Yet I am sure of one pleasúre,
And shortly it is this—
That where ye be, me seemeth pardé,
I could not fare amiss.
Without more speech I you beseech
That we were soon agone;
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

HE.

If ye go thyder, ye must consider,
When ye have lust to dine,
There shall no meat be for to gete,
Nor drinke, bere, ale ne wine,
Ne shetës clean, to lie between,
Made of thread and twine;
None other house, but leaves and boughs,
To cover your head and mine.
Lo, mine heart sweet, this ill diete
Should make you pale and wan:
Wherefore I to the wood will go
Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

Among the wild deer such an archere
  As men say that ye be,
Ne may not fail of good vitayle
  Where is so great plenté :
And water clear of the rivere
  Shall be full sweet to me ;
With which in hele I shall right wele
  Endure, as ye shall see ;
And, or we go, a bed or two
  I can provide anone ;
For, in my mind, of all mankind
  I love but you alone.

HE.

Lo, yet, before, ye must do more,
  If ye will go with me ;
As, cut your hair up by your ear,
  Your kirtle by the knee ;
With bow in hand for to withstand
  Your enemies, if need be,
And this same night, before daylight,
  To woodward I will flee.
If that ye will all this fulfil,
  Do it shortly as ye can
Else will I to the green-wood go,
  Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

I shall as now do more for you
  Than 'longeth to womanhede ;
To short my hair, a bow to bear,
  To shoot in time of need.
O my sweet mother, before all other—
  For you I have most drede !

But now, adieu! I must ensue
Where fortune doth me lead.
All this make ye: now let us flee:
The day cometh fast upon:
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

He.

Nay, nay, not so; ye shall not go,
And I shall tell you why—
Your appetite is to be light
Of love, I well espy:
For right as ye have said to me,
In like wise hardily
Ye would answere whoever it were,
In way of company:
'Tis said of old, "Soon hot, soon cold";
And so is a womán:
Wherefore I to the wood will go,
Alone, a banished man.

She.

If ye take heed, it is no need
Such words to say to me:
For oft you prayed and long assayed
Or I loved you, pardé:
And though that I of ancestry
A baron's daughter be,
Yet have you proved how I you loved,
A squire of low degree;
And ever shall, what so befall
To die therefore anone;
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

HE.

A baron's child to be beguiled,
It were a curséd deed!
To be feláw with an outlaw—
Almighty God forbede!
Yet better were the poor squyere
Alone to forest yede
Than ye shall say another day
That by my wicked deed
Ye were betrayed. Wherefore, good maid,
The best rede that I can,
Is, that I to the green-wood go,
Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

Whatever befall, I never shall
Of this thing be upbraid:
But if ye go, and leave me so,
Then have ye me betrayed.
Remember you wele, how that ye dele;
For if ye, as ye said,
Be so unkind to leave behind
Your love, the Nut-brown Maid,
Trust me truly that I shall die
Soon after ye be gone:
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

HE.

If that ye went, ye should repent;
For in the forest now
I have purveyed me of a maid
Whom I love more than you:
Another fairer than ever ye were
I dare it well avow;

And of you both each should be wroth
With other, as I trow:
It were mine ease to live in peace;
So will I, if I can:
Wherefore I to the wood will go,
Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

Though in the wood I understood
Ye had a paramour,
All this may nought remove my thought,
But that I will be your':
And she shall find me soft and kind
And courteis every hour;
Glad to fulfil all that she will
Command me, to my power:
For had ye, loo, an hundred mo,
Yet would I be that one:
For, in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.

HE.

Mine own dear love, I see the prove
That ye be kind and true;
Of maid, of wife, in all my life,
The best that ever I knew.
Be merry and glad; be no more sad;
The case is changéd new;
For it were ruth that for your truth
Ye should have cause to rue.
Be not dismayed, whatsoever I said
To you when I began:
I will not to the green-wood go;
I am no banished man.

SHE.

These tidings be more glad to me
  Than to be made a queen,
If I were sure they should endure;
  But it is often seen
When men will break promise they speak
  The wordis on the splene.
Ye shape some wile me to beguile,
  And steal from me, I ween:
Then were the case worse than it was
  And I more wo-begone:
For, in my mind, of all mankind
  I love but you alone.

HE.

Ye shall not nede further to drede:
  I will not disparáge
You (God defend), sith you descend
  Of so great a linage.
Now understand: to Westmoreland
  Which is my heritage,
I will you bring; and with a ring,
  By way of marriage
I will you take, and lady make,
  As shortly as I can;
Thus have you won an Earles son,
  And not a banished man.

ENVOY.

Here may ye see that women be
  In love meek, kind, and stable;
Let never man reprove them than,
  Or call them variable;

But rather pray God that we may
To them be comfortable:
Which sometimes proveth such as He loveth,
If they be charitable.
For sith men would that women should
Be meek to them each one;
Much more aught they to God obey,
And serve but Him alone.

XVII.

YOUNG BEKIE.

YOUNG BEKIE was as brave a knight
As ever sail'd the sea;
An' he's doen him to the court of France,
To serve for meat and fee.

He had nae been i' the court of France
A twelvemonth nor sae long,
Till he fell in love with the king's daughter
An' was thrown in prison strong.

The king he had but ae daughter
Burd Isbel was her name;
An' she has to the prison-house gane,
To hear the prisoner's mane.

"O gin a lady woud borrow me,
At her stirrup-foot I woud rin;
Or gin a widow wad borrow me,
I woud swear to be her son.

"Or gin a virgin woud borrow me,
I woud wed her wi' a ring;
I'd gi' her ha's, I'd gie her bowers,
The bonny tow'rs o' Linne."

O barefoot, barefoot gaed she but,
An' barefoot came she ben;
It was no for want o' hose an' shoone,
Nor time to put them on;

But a' for fear that her father dear,
Had heard her making din:
She's stown the keys o' the prison-house dor
An' latten the prisoner gang.

O whan she saw him, Young Bekie,
Her heart was wondrous sair!
For the mice but an' the bold rottons
Had eaten his yallow hair.

She's gi'en him a shaver for his beard,
A comber till his hair,
Five hunder pound in his pocket,
To spen', and nae to spair.

She's gi'en him a steed was good in need,
An' a saddle o' royal bone,
A leash o' hounds o' ae litter,
An' Hector called one.

Atween this twa a vow was made,
'Twas made full solemnly,
That or three years was come and gane,
Well married they shoud be.

He had nae been in 's ain country
A twelvemonth till an end,
Till he's forc'd to marry a duke's daughter,
Or than lose a' his land.

"Ohon, alas!" says Young Bekie,
"I know not what to dee;
For I canno win to Burd Isbel,
And she kensnae to come to me."

O it fell once upon a day
Burd Isbel fell asleep,
An' up it starts the Belly Blin,
An' stood at her bed-feet.

"O waken, waken, Burd Isbel,
How [can] you sleep so soun',
Whan this is Bekie's wedding day,
An' the marriage gain' on?

"Ye do ye to your mither's bow'r,
Think neither sin nor shame;
An' ye tak twa o' your mither's marys
To keep ye frae thinking lang.

"Ye dress yoursel' in the red scarlet,
An' your marys in dainty green,
An' ye pit girdles about your middles
Woud buy an earldome.

"O ye gang down by yon seaside,
An' down by yon sea-stran';
Sae bonny will the Hollans boats
Come rowin' till your han'.

"Ye set your milk-white foot abord,
Cry, Hail ye, Domine!
An' I shal be the steerer o't,
To row you o'er the sea."

She's tane her till her mither's bow'r,
Thought neither sin nor shame,
An' she took twa o' her mither's marys,
To keep her frae thinking lang.

She's dressed hersel' i' the red scarlet,
Her marys i' dainty green,
And they pat girdles about their middles
Woud buy an earldome.

An' they gid down by yon sea-side,
An' down by yon sea-stran';
Sae bonny did the Hollan boats
Come rowin' to their han'.

She set her milk-white foot on board,
Cried "Hail ye, Domine!"
And the Belly Blin was the steerer o't,
To row her o'er the sea.

Whan she came to young Bekie's gate,
She heard the music play;
Sae well she kent frae a' she heard,
It was his wedding day.

She's pitten her han' in her pocket,
Gin the porter guineas three;
"Hae, tak ye that, ye proud porter,
Bid the bride-groom speake to me."

O whan that he cam up the stair,
He fell low down on his knee:
He hail'd the king, an' he hail'd the queen,
An' he hailed him, young Bekie.

"O I've been porter at your gates
This thirty years and three;
But there's three ladies at them now,
Their like I never did see.

"There's ane o' them dress'd in red scarlet,
And twa in dainty green,
An' they hae girdles about their middles
Woud buy an earldome."

Then out it spake the bierly bride,
Was a' goud to the chin:
"Gin she be braw without," she says,
"We's be as braw within."

Then up it starts him, young Bekie,
An' the tears was in his ee:
"I'll lay my life it's Burd Isbel,
Come o'er the sea to me."

O quickly ran he down the stair,
An' whan he saw 'twas she,
He kindly took her in his arms,
And kissed her tenderly.

"O hae ye forgotten, Young Bekie
The vow ye made to me,
Whan I took ye out o' the prison strong
Whan ye was condemn'd to die?

I gae you a steed was good in need,
An' a saddle o' royal bone,
A leash o' hounds o' ae litter,
An' Hector called one."

It was well kent what the lady said,
That it wasnae a lee,
For at ilka word the lady spake,
The hound fell at her knee.

"Tak hame, tak hame your daughter dear,
A blessing gae her wi',
For I maun marry my Burd Isbel,
That's come o'er the sea to me."

"Is this the custom o' your house,
Or the fashion o' your lan',
To marry a maid in a May mornin',
And send her back at even?"

XVIII.

SIR LAUNCELOT AND THE FAWCON.

MALORY.

How Sir Launcelot at the request of a lady recovered a fawcon, whereby he was deceived.

So sir Launcelot rode through many strange countries, over marish and valies, til by fortune he came to a castle, and as he passed beyond the castle him thought hee heard two little bells ring, and then he was ware of a fawcon that came flying over his head toward an high elme, and long lunes about her feete; and as shee flew unto the elme to take her perch, the lunes overcaught bough, and as she would have taken her flight she hung fast by the leggs, and sir Launcelot saw how she hung, and beheld the faire fawcon perigot, and he was sorry for her. In the meane while came a lady out of a castle, and cried on hie: "Oh, Launcelot! Launcelot! as thou art floure of all knights of the world, helpe me to get my hawke, for if my hawke be lost my lord will destroy mee; for I kept the hawke, and she slipt away from me, and if my lord my husband know it, hee is so hastie that he will slay me." "What is your lords name?" said sir Launcelot. "Sir," she said, "his name is sir Phelot, a knight that 'longeth to the king of Northgales." "Faire lady," said sir Launcelot, "sith that yee know my name and require me on my knighthood to helpe you, I will doe that I may to get your hawke, and yet God knoweth I am an il climer and the tree is passing hie, and few boughs to helpe me withall." And therewith sir Launcelot alighted, and tied his horse to the same tree, and praied the lady to unarme him. And so when he was unarmed, hee put off all his clothes unto his shirt

and breeches, and with might and force climbed up to the fawcon, and tied the lunes to a great rotten branch, and threw the hawke downe with the branch. Anon the lady gat the hawke with her hand. And therewithall came sir Phelot out of the groves suddainely that was her husband, al armed with his naked sword in his hand, and said: "Oh, knight sir Launcelot, now have I found thee as I would have thee," and stood at the bole of the tree to sley him. "Ah, lady!" said sir Launcelot, "why have ye betrayed me?" "Shee hath done as I commanded her," said sir Phelot; "and therefore there is none other way but thine houre is come that thou must die." "That were shame," said sir Launcelot, "that an armed knight should slay a naked man by treason." "Thou gettest none other grace," said sir Phelot. "Truely," said sir Launcelot, "that shall bee thy shame; but sith thou wilt doe none other wise, take mine harneis with thee, and hang my sword upon a bough that I may get it, and then doe thy best to sley me and thou canst." "Nay, nay," said sir Phelot, "for I know thee better then thou weenest, therefore thou gettest no weapon and I may keepe thee therefro." "Alas," said Sir Launcelot, "that ever any knight should die weapenlesse." And therewithall hee looked above and under him, and over his head he saw a roundspike on a big bough leavelesse, and brake it off by the body of the tree, and then hee came lower and awaited how his owne horse stood, and suddenly hee lept on the farther side of the horse from the knight. And then sir Phelot lashed at him eagerly, weening to have slaine him, but sir Launcelot put away the strooke with the roundspike, and therewith he smote him on the side of the head that he fell in a sound to the ground. Then sir Launcelot tooke his sword out of his hand, and strooke his neck from the body. Then cried the lady, "Alas, why hast thou slaine my husband?" "I

am not the causer," said sir Launcelot, "for with falshood he would have slaine me with treason, and now it is fallen on you both." And then she sounded as though she would die. And therewithall sir Launcelot got all his armour as well as hee could, and put it on him for dread of more resort, for he dreaded that the knight's castle was nigh. And as soone as hee might, he tooke his horse and departed thence, and thanked our Lord God that he had escaped that adventure.

XIX.

MORTE D'ARTHUR.

MALORY.

"But my time hieth fast," said king Arthur unto sir Bediver, "therefore take thou Excalibur my good sword, and goe with it unto yonder water side, and, when thou comest there, I charge thee throw my sword into that water, and come againe and tell me what thou shalt see there." "My lord," said sir Bedivere, "your commande shall be done, and lightly bring you word againe." And so sir Bedivere departed; and by the way he beheld that noble sword where the pummel and the haft were all of precious stones, and then hee said to himselfe, "If I throw this rich sword into the water, thereof shall never come good, but harme and losse." And then sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree, and as soone as hee might he came againe unto king Arthur, and said hee had beene at the water, and had throwen the sword into the water. "What sawest thou there?" said the king. "Sir," said he, "I saw nothing but waves and wind." "That is untruely said of thee," said king Arthur, "therefore goe thou lightly and doe my command, as thou art to mee lefe and deere; spare not, but throw it in." Then sir

Bedivere returned againe, and tooke the sword in his hand; and then him thought it sinne and shame to throw away that noble sword, and so eft hee hid the sword, and returned againe and told to the king that hee had beene at the water and done his command. "What saw yee there?" said the king. "Sir," said hee, "I saw nothing but the water wap and waves waune." "Ah, traitour untrue!" said king Arthur, "now hast thou betraied me two times. Who would have wend that thou that hast beene unto me so leefe and deere, and thou art named a noble knight, and wouldest betray mee for the rich sword? But now goe againe lightly, for thy long tarying putteth me in great jeopardie of my life, for I have taken cold; and but if thou doe as I commaund thee, and if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with my owne hands, for thou wouldst for my rich sword see me dead." Then sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly tooke it up, and went to the waters side; and there hee bound the girdell about the hilts, and then hee threw the sword into the water as farre as hee might; and there came an arme and an hand above the water, and met it and caught it, and so shooke it thrice and brandished.

And then the hand vanished away with the sword in the water. So sir Bedivere came againe to the king, and told him what he had seene. "Alas!" said the king, "helpe me from hence, for I dread me I have taried over long." Then sir Bedivere took king Arthur upon his backe, and so went with him to the waters side. And when they were at the waters side, even fast by the bank hoved a little barge with many faire ladies in it, and among them all was a queene, and all they had blacke hoods, and they wept and shriked when they saw king Arthur.

"Now put mee into the barge," said the king; and so hee did softly; and there received him three queenes with

great mourning, and so these three queenes set them downe, and in one of their laps king Arthur laide his head. And then that queene said, "Ah! deer brother, why have ye taried so long from me? Alas! this wound on your head hath taken over much cold." And so then they rowed from the land, and sir Bediver beheld al those ladies goe from him; then sir Bedivere cried, "Ah! my lord Arthur, what shall become of mee now ye goe from me, and leave me here alone among mine enemies?" "Comfort thyselfe," said king Arthur, "and do as well as thou maiest, for in mee is no trust for to trust in; for I wil into the vale of Avilion for to heale me of my grievous wound; and if thou never heere more of mee, pray for my soule." But evermore the queenes and the ladies wept and shriked that it was pittie for to heare them. And as soone as sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, hee wept and wailed, and so tooke the forrest; and so he went all the night, and in the morning hee was ware betweene two hills of a chappell and an hermitage.

XX.

EVERYMAN.

The Argument.—Everyman, summoned to prepare for Death, asks all his acquaintance in turn to bear him company on the journey. He has tried Fellowship and Kindred.

[*The spelling is modernized.*]

EVERYMAN.

AH, Jesus, is all come hereto?
Lo, fair words make fools feign;
They promise, and nothing will do certain.
My kinsmen promised me faithfully
For to abide with me steadfastly,
And now fast away do they flee:
Even so Fellowship promised me.

What friend were best me of to provide?
I lose my time here longer to abide.
Yet in my mind a thing there is;
All my life I have loved riches.
If that my Good now help me might,
It would make my heart full light.
I will speak to him in this distress.
Where art thou, my Goods and riches?

GOODS.

Who calleth me? Everyman, what haste thou hast!
I lie here in corners, trussed and piled so high,
And in chests I am locked so fast,
Also sacked in bags—thou mayst see in thine eye—
I cannot stir; in packs low I lie.
What would ye have? lightly me say.

EVERYMAN.

Come hither, Good, in all the haste thou may.
For of counsel I must desire thee.

GOODS.

Sir, and ye in the world have trouble or adversity,
That can I help you to remedy shortly.

EVERYMAN.

It is another disease that grieveth me;
In this world it is not, I tell thee so.
I am sent for, another way to go,
To give a strait account general
Before the highest Jupiter of all;
And all my life I have had Joy and pleasure in thee.
Therefore I pray thee go with me,
For peradventure thou mayst before God Almighty
My reckoning help to clean and purify;
For it is said ever among,
That money maketh all right that is wrong.

GOODS.

Nay, Everyman, I sing another song.
I follow no man in such voyages;
For and I went with thee
Thou shouldst fare much the worse for me;
For because on me thou did set thy mind,
Thy reckoning I have made blotted and blind,
That thine account thou cannot make truly;
And that hast thou for the love of me.

EVERYMAN.

That would grieve me full sore,
When I should come to that fearful answer.
Up, let us go thither together.

GOODS.

Nay, not so, I am too brittle, I may not endure;
I will follow no man on foot, be thou sure.

EVERYMAN.

Alas, I have thee loved, and had great pleasure
All my life-days on good and treasure.

GOODS.

That is to thy damnation without lesing,
For my love is contrary to the love everlasting.
But if thou had me loved moderately during,
As to the poor to give part for me,
Then shouldst thou not in this dolour be,
Nor in this great sorrow and care.

EVERYMAN.

Lo, now, I was deceived or I was ware,
And all I may wyte my spending of time.

GOODS.

What, weenest thou that I am thine?

EVERYMAN.

I had wend so.

GOODS.

Nay, Everyman, I say no;
As for a while I was lent thee,
A season thou hast had me in prosperity;
My condition is man's soul to kill;
If I save one, a thousand I do spill;
Weenest thou that I will follow thee
From this world? Nay, verily.

EVERYMAN.

I had wend otherwise.

GOODS.

Therefore to thy soul Good is a thief;
For when thou art dead this is my guise
Another to deceive in the same wise
As I have done thee, and all to his soul's reprief.

EVERYMAN.

O false Good, cursed thou be!
Thou traitor to God, thou hast deceived me,
And caught me in thy snare.

GOODS.

Marry, thou brought thyself in care,
Whereof I am glad,
I must needs laugh, I cannot be sad.

EVERYMAN.

Ah, Good, thou hast had my heartly love;
I gave thee that which should be the Lord's above,
But wilt thou not go with me in deed?
I pray thee truth to say.

GOODS.

No, so God me speed,
Therefore farewell, and have good day.

XXI.

THE PASTON LETTERS.

1.

To my worshipful husband, William Paston, be this letter taken.

DEAR HUSBAND, I recommend me to you, &c. Blessed be God, I send you good tidings of the coming and the bringing home of the gentlewoman that ye weeten of from Reedham this same night, according to appointment that ye made there for yourself.

And as for the first acquaintance between John Paston and the said gentlewoman, she made him gentle cheer in gentle wise, and said he was verily your son; and so I hope there shall need no great treaty between them.

The parson of Stockton told me, if ye would buy her a gown, her mother would give thereto a goodly fur; the gown needeth for to be had; and of colour it would be a goodly blue, or else a bright sanguine.

I pray you to buy for me two pipes of gold. Your stews do well. The Holy Trinity have you in governance.

Written at Paston in haste the Wednesday next after "Deus qui errantibus;" for default of a good secretary &c.

Yours, AGNES PASTON.

2.

To my right reverend and right honourable master, John Paston, be this given.

Salvete &c. Tidings, the Duke of Orleans hath made his oath upon the sacrament, and used it, never for to bear arms against England, in the presence of the king and all the lords, except my Lord of Gloucester; and in proving my said Lord of Gloucester agreed never to his deliverance, when the mass began he took his barge, &c.

God give grace the said Lord of Orleans be true, for this same week shall he towards France.

Also Frenchmen and Picards a great number came to Arfleet, for to have rescued it; and our lords with their small puissance manly beat them, and put them to flight, and, blessed be our Lord, have taken the said city of Arfleet; the which is a great jewel to all England, and especially to our country.

Moreover there is one come into England, a knight out of Spain, with a kerchief of pleasaunce enwrapped about his arm; the which knight will run a course with a sharp spear for his sovereign lady's sake, whom either Sir Richard Wodvile, or Sir Christopher Talbot, shall deliver, to the worship of England and of themselves by God's grace.

Farthermore ye be remembered, that an esquire of Suffolk, called John Lyston, recovered, in assize of novel disseisin, 700 marks in damages against Sir Robert Wingfield, &c. In avoiding of the payment of the said 700 marks, the said Sir Robert Wingfield subtlely hath outlawed the said John Lyston in Nottinghamshire, by the virtue of which outlawry all manner of chattel to the said John Lyston appertaining are accrued unto the king &c. And anon as the said outlawry was certified, my Lord Treasurer granted the said 700 marks to my Lord of Norfolk for the arrears of his sowde whilst he was in Scotland. And according to this assignment aforesaid, tallies delivered, &c. And my Lord of Norfolk hath released the same 700 marks to Sir Robert Wingfield.

And here is great heaving and shoving by my Lord of Suffolk and all his counsel for to espy how this matter came about, &c. Sir, I beseech recommend me unto my mistress your mother, to my mistress your wife, and to my mistress your sister, et omnibus aliis quorum interest, &c.

Sir, I pray you, with all my heart, hold me excused that I write thus homely and briefly unto you, for truly convenable space sufficed me not.

No more, at this time, but the Trinity have you in protection, &c., and when your leisure is, resort again unto your college, the Inner Temple, for there be many which sore desire your presence, Welles and others, &c.

Written on the Feast of All Saints, between mass and matins calamo festinante, &c.

Yours, ROBERT REPPS.

3.

To my worshipful and reverend Lord John Viscount Beaumont.

Right worshipful, and my reverend and most special Lord, I recommend me unto your good grace in the most humble and lowly wise that I can or may, desiring to hear of your prosperity and welfare, as to my most singular joy and special comfort.

And if it please your Highness, as touching the sudden adventure that fell lately at Coventry, please it your Lordship to hear, that on Corpus Christi even last passed, between eight and nine of the clock at afternoon, Sir Humphrey Stafford had brought my master, Sir James of Ormond, toward his inn from my Lady of Shrewsbury and returned from him towards his inn, he met with Sir Robert Harcourt coming from his mother's towards his inn, and passed Sir Humphrey; and Richard his son came somewhat behind, and when they met together they fell in hands together, and Sir Robert smote him a great stroke on the head with his sword, and Richard with his dagger hastily went toward him, and as he stumbled, one of Harcourt's men smote him in the back with a knife; men wot not who it was readily; his father heard noise and rode toward them, and his men ran before him thitherward; and in the going down off his horse,

one, he wot not who, behind him, smote him on the head with an edged tool; men know not with us, with what weapon, that he fell down, and his son fell down before him as good as dead; and all this was done, as men say, in a Pater-noster while.

And forthwith Sir Humphrey Stafford's men followed after, and slew two men of Harcourt's, one Swynerton and Bradshawe, and more be hurt, some be gone, and some be in prison in the jail at Coventry.

And before the coroner of Coventry, upon the sight of the bodies, there be indicted as principals for the death of Richard Stafford, Sir Robert Harcourt and the two men that be dead; and for the two men of Harcourt's that be dead, there be indicted two men of Sir Humphrey's as principals; and as yet there hath been nothing found before the justice of the peace of Coventry of this riot, because the sheriff of Warwickshire is dead, and they may not sit unto the time there be a new sheriff; and all this mischief fell because of an old debate that was between them for taking of a distress, as it is told.

And Almighty Jesu preserve your high estate, my special Lord, and send you long life and good health.

Written at Coventry on Tuesday next after Corpus Christi day, &c.

By your own poor servant,

JOHN NORTHWOOD.

4.

To the right worshipful John Paston, at Norwich.

Right worshipful sir, I recommend me to you, and am right sorry of that I shall say, and have so washed this little bill with sorrowful tears, that unneths ye shall read it.

As on Monday next after May day there came tidings to London, that on Thursday before, the Duke of Suffolk

came unto the coasts of Kent full near Dover with his two ships and a little spinner; the which spinner he sent with certain letters, by certain of his trusty men unto Calaisward, to know how he should be received; and with him met a ship called Nicholas of the Tower with other ships waiting on him, and by them that were in the spinner the master of the Nicholas had knowledge of the Duke's coming.

When he espied the Duke's ships, he sent forth his boats to weet what they were, and the Duke himself spoke to them, and said, he was by the king's commandment sent to Calaisward, &c., and they said he must speak with their master; and so he, with two or three of his men, went forth with them in their boat to the Nicholas; and when he came, the master bade him, "Welcome, traitor," as men say.

And further the master desired to weet if the shipmen would hold with the Duke, and they sent word they would not in no wise; and so he was in the Nicholas till Saturday next following.

Some say he wrote much thing to be delivered to the king, but that is not verily known.

He had his confessor with him, &c.; and some say he was arraigned in the ship on their manner upon the Impeachments, and found guilty, &c.

Also he asked the name of the ship, and when he knew it, he remembered Stacy that said, if he might escape the danger of the Tower he should be safe, and then his heart failed him, for he thought he was deceived.

And in the sight of all his men he was drawn out of the great ship into the boat, and there was an axe and a stock, and one of the lewdest of the ship bade him lay down his head and he should be fairly ferd with, and die on a sword; and took a rusty sword and smote off his head within half a dozen strokes, and took away his

gown of russet, and his doublet of velvet mailed, and laid his body on the sands of Dover: and some say his head was set on a pole by it; and his men set on the land by great circumstance and prey.

And the sheriff of Kent doth watch the body, and sent his under-sheriff to the judges to weet what to do; and also to the king what shall be done.

Further I wot not, but thus far is it, if the process be erroneous let his counsel reverse it, &c.

And for all the other matters they sleep, and the fryar also, &c. Sir Thomas Keriel is taken prisoner and all the leg-harness, and about 3,000 Englishmen slain.

Matthew Gooth, with 1,500, fled, and saved himself and them. And Peris Brusy was chief captain and had 10,000 Frenchmen, and more, &c.

I pray you let my mistress, your mother, know these tidings, and God have you all in his keeping.

I pray you this bill may recommend me to my mistresses, your mother and wife, &c.

James Gresham hath written to John of Dam, and recommendeth him, &c.

Written in great haste at London, the 5th day of May, &c.

By your wife,

WILLIAM LOMNER.

5.

To my right honourable master, John Paston.

Right honourable and my right entirely beloved master, I recommend me unto you with all manner of due reverence in the most lowly wise, as me ought to do, evermore desiring to hear of your worshipful state, prosperity and welfare; the which I beseek God, of his abundant grace, increase and maintain to his most pleasance and to your heart's desire.

Pleaseth it, your good and gracious mastership, tenderly to consider the great losses and hurts that your poor petitioner hath, and hath had, ever since the commons of Kent came to the Blackheath, and that is at fifteen years passed; whereas my master, Sir John Fastolf, knight, that is your testator, commanded your beseecher to take a man, and two of the best horses that were in his stable, with him, to ride to the commons of Kent to get the articles that they come for; and so I did, and all so soon as I came to the Blackheath, the captain made the commons to take me; and for the savation of my master's horses, I made my fellow to ride away with the two horses; and I was brought forthwith before the Captain of Kent; and the captain demanded me, what was the cause of my coming thither, and why that I made my fellow to steal away with the horses; and I said that I came thither to cheer with my wife's brethren, and others that were mine allies, and gossips of mine, that were present there; and then was there one there and said to the captain that I was one of Sir John Fastolf's men, and the two horses were Sir John Fastolf's; and then the captain let cry Treason upon me throughout all the field, and brought me at four parts of the field, with a herald of the Duke of Exeter before me, in the Duke's coat-of arms, making four oyez at four parts of the field; proclaiming openly by the said herald, that I was sent thither for to espy their puissance and their habiliments of war, from the greatest traitor that was in England or in France, as the said captain made proclamation at that time, from one Sir John Fastolf, knight, the which minished all the garrisons of Normandy, and Manns, and Mayn, the which was the cause of the losing of all the king's title and right of an heritance that he had beyond sea. And moreover, he said that the said Sir John Fastolf had furnished his place with the old

soldiers of Normandy, and habiliments of war, to destroy the commons of Kent when that they came to Southwark, and therefore he said plainly that I should lose my head; and so forthwith I was taken, and led to the captain's tent, and one axe and one block was brought forth to have smitten off mine head; and then my master Poynyngs your brother, with other of my friends came, and letted the captain, and said plainly, that there should die an hundred or two that in case be that I died; and so by that mean my life was saved at that time.

And then I was sworn to the captain, and to the commons, that I should go to Southwark and array me in the best wise that I could, and come again to them to help them; and so I got the articles, and brought them to my master, and that cost me more amongst the commons that day than 27s.

Whereupon I came to my master Fastolf, and brought him the articles, and informed him of all the matter, and counselled him to put away all his habiliments of war, and the old soldiers, and so he did, and went himself to the Tower, and all his meny with him but Betts and one Matthew Brayn; and had I not been, the commons would have brenned his place and all his tenuries; where though it cost me of my own proper goods at that time more than six marks in meat and drink, and notwithstanding the captain that same time let take me at the White Hart in Southwark, and there commanded Lovelace to despoil me out of mine array, and so he did; and there he took a fine gown of muster devillers furred with fine beavers, and one pair of brigandines covered with blue velvet and gilt nails, with leg-harness; the value of the gown and the brigandines 8*l.*

Item, the captain sent certain of his meny to my chamber in your rents, and there broke up my chest, and took away one obligation of mine that was due unto me

of 36*l.* by a priest of Paul's, and one other obligation of one knight of 10*l.*, and my purse with five rings of gold, and 17*s.* 6*d.* of gold & silver; and one harness complete of the touch of Milan; and one gown of fine perse blue, furred with martens; and two gowns, one furred with bogey, and one other lined with frieze; and there would have smitten off mine head when that they had despoiled me at White Hart; and there my master Poynyngs and my friends saved me, and so I was put up, til at night that the battle was at London Bridge; and then at night the captain put me out into the battle at the bridge, and there I was wounded, and hurt near hand to death; and there I was six hours in the battle, and might never come out thereof; and four times before that time I was carried about throughout Kent and Sussex, and there they would have smitten off my head; and in Kent there as my wife dwelled, they took away all our goods moveable that we had; and there would have hanged my wife and five of my children, and left her no more goods but her kirtle and her smock; and anon after that hurling, the Bishop of Rochester impeached me to the queen, and so I was arrested by the queen's commandment into the Marshalsea, and there was in right great duress, and fear of mine life, and was threatened to have been hanged, drawn, and quartered; and so would have made me have impeach my master Fastolf of treason, and because that I would not, they had me up to Westminster, and there would have sent me to the gaol-house at Windsor, but my wife's and one cousin of mine own, that were yeomen of the crown, they went to the king, and got grace and one charter of pardon.

Per le votre,

J. Payn.

6.

Errands to London of Agnes Paston, the 28th day of January, 1457, the year of King Henry VI. the 36th.

To pray Greenfield to send me faithfully word by writing how Clement Paston hath done his endeavour in learning.

And if he hath not done well, nor will not amend, pray him that he will truly belash him till he will amend ; and so did the last master, and the best that ever he had at Cambridge.

And say Greenfield, that if he will take upon him to bring him into good rule and learning, that I may verily know he doth his endeavour, I will give him 10 marks for his labour, for I had lever he were fairly buried than lost for default.

Item, to see how many gowns Clement hath, and they that be bare, let them be raised.

He hath a short green gown. And a short muster-develers gown, were never raised.

And a short blue gown, that was raised, and made of a side gown when I was last at London.

And a side russet gown furred with beaver was made this time two years.

And a side murray gown was made this time twelve-month.

Item, to do make me six spoons of eight ounces of troy weight, well fashioned and double gilt.

And say Elizabeth Paston that she must use herself to work readily, as other gentlewomen do, and somewhat to help herself therewith.

Item to pay the Lady Pole 26s. and 8d. for her board

And if Greenfield have done well his devoir to Clement or will do his devoir, give him the noble.

AGNES PASTON.

7.

To John Paston, dwelling in the Inner Inn of the Temple, at London, be this letter delivered in haste.

Son, I greet you, and send you God's blessing and mine; as for my daughter your wife, she fareth well, blessed be God! as a woman in her plight may do, and all your sons and daughters.

And forasmuch as ye will send me no tidings, I send you such as be in this country; Richard Lynsted came this day from Paston and let me weet, that on Saturday last past, Dravell, half-brother to Warren Harman, was taken with enemies, walking by the seaside, and have him forth with them; and they took two pilgrims, a man and a woman, and they robbed the woman and let her go, and led the man to the sea; and when they knew he was a pilgrim, they gave him money, and set him again on the land; and they have this week taken four vessels off Winterton, and Happesburgh and Eccles.

Men be sore afraid for taking of me, for there be ten great vessels of the enemy's; God give grace that the sea may be better kept than it is now, or else it shall be a perilous dwelling by the sea-coast.

I pray you greet well your brethren, and say them that I send them God's blessing and mine, and say William that if Janet Lauton be not paid for the crimson coat which Alson Crane wrote to her for in her own name, that then he pay her, and see Alson Crane's name stricken out of her book, for she saith she will ask no man the money but Alson Crane. And I pray you that ye will remember the letter that I sent you last, and God be with you.

Written at Norwich, the Wednesday next before St. Gregory.

By your mother, AGNES PASTON.

NOTES

I.—WINTER.

THIS plaintive song of some unknown minstrel is quite one of the earliest rhymed lyrics in English. The MS. (Rawlinson, G. 22) is in the Bodleian Library. The end is deficient. The date of it is about 1225 A.D.

'Merry it is while summer lasts with the song of the bird, but now draweth nigh the wind's blast and violent weather. Ah! how long is this night! And I, amid very much trouble, sorrow and mourn and fast.'

1. **ilast.** The prefix *i*—later *y*—is generally the mark of the past participle; it represents the Anglo-Saxon *ge*. *Cf.* the German. Here it is apparently present indicative.
2. **fugheles** = fowl's, showing that word's connection with Ger. *Vogel*.
3. **oc** is the same as **ac** = but (see X., 5). **nu** = now. **necheth**, approacheth; 'negheth' is fairly common, but this spelling is unique.
5. A significant cry when we remember the scarcity of artificial light in the Middle Ages.
6. **Ich** = I. as German. **wel michel**, very much. *Cf.* Scotch *mickle*.
7. **fast.** This word is supplied to complete the rhyme.

II.—CUCKOO SONG.

This early lyric is also of unknown authorship. It appears in the Harleian MS. (No. 978) at the British Museum, where it is accompanied with an excellent tune, a Latin version, and Latin directions for singing by two male voices. The last two lines form a refrain. The date of it is about 1250. It was first printed in Sir John Hawkins' *History of Music*.

'Summer has come in; sing loud, cuckoo! The seed groweth, the meadow blossometh, and the wood springeth now into life. The ewe bleateth after the lamb. The cow loweth after her calf. The bullock leaps, the buck seeks cover; sing merrily, cuckoo. "Cuckoo, cuckoo"—well singest thou, cuckoo. Never cease now. . . .'

3. **bloweth** = bloometh or blossometh; as still in poetry and phrases like 'full-blown.'
8. **verteth.** We must here accept the explanation, 'seeks the vert, or fern.'

11. **swike** = cease. *Cf.* Ger. *schweigen*, to be silent. **ne** sometimes = nor; here probably, and often in these pages, it is merely an anticipatory negative, as in Fr. *ne . . . jamais.*

III.—ALISOUN.

This poem, also of unknown authorship, is one of our earliest love-songs; it is assigned to the year 1310. Observe that the 'lh' of the last piece, which suggests a pronunciation like the Welsh 'll,' is no longer used. The strong alliteration throughout, especially in the refrain, reminds us that alliteration is earlier than rhyme as a mark of English poetry. This is a remarkable poem, considering its very early date, elaborate in metre and powerful in its pathos.

'Between March and April, when the spray (or branch) begins to spring into life, the little bird has its desire to sing in its own language. I live in love-longing for the seemliest (most beautiful) of all things. She may (or "may she") bring me bliss; I am in her thraldom. *Refrain:* And I have seized a lucky chance; I think it is sent me from Heaven. My love has turned from all other women, and alighted on Alison.

'In hue her hair is fair enough, her eyebrows brown, her eyes black; she laughs upon me with a lovely look; she has a small and well-formed waist. Unless she will take me to her to be her own mate, I shall give up (the desire) to live long, and fall down doomed.

'When at night I turn about and stay awake, for this reason my cheeks grow wan. Lady, all for thy sake longing has fallen upon me. In the world there is no man so wise that he can tell all her goodness. Her neck is whiter than the swan, and she is the fairest maid in town.

'I am all worn out with watching on account of my wooing; I am as weary as water in a weir. Lest anyone should rob me of my mate, I have long been in anxiety. (But) it is better to endure sorely awhile than to mourn evermore. Comeliest of all that wear women's apparel, hearken to my song.'

3. **hire** = her; the genders of pronouns are not yet discriminated. In Early English there is no neuter gender; even in our Bible translation the word 'its' is almost unknown. Throughout this piece 'he' stands for 'she,' 'hire' for 'her.'
4. **lud** = language, connected with Ger. *Lied*, a song.
6. **semloke** = seemly; our adverbial *-ly* is a corruption of 'like.' **thynge**: the final *e* is here the mark of the plural.
9. **hendy** = handy, lucky. **hap** = chance, as in 'per-haps,' 'happen,' 'happy,' etc. **y-hent** is past part. of the A.S. *hentan*, to seize. **Ichabbe**: the *ch* here and in Icham, Ichot, Ichulle is to be pronounced soft as in German and Scotch. It means 'I have.'
10. **Ichot** = I wot, I think. The A.S. verb **witan**, to know, survives in these forms. PRES., wot (2 sing., wost or wottest). PAST, wist. INF., to wit (as in the modern phrase). PRES. PART., witting. PAST PART., wot; in etymology the word is akin to Lat. *video* and Grk. *οἶδα*.
11. **y-lent** = leaned, or turned upon me.
13. **browë**, eyebrows (plural); **eyë** is plural of ey.
14. **lossom** = lovesome, as lissom = lithesome. **chere**, countenance; its first meaning.

17. **bote** = but; 'but she will' = 'unless she will.' This shows the early origin of our conjunctive use of 'but,' as in 'Whence all *but he* had fled.' From this it became a preposition, so that 'but him' is now equally correct.
18. **buen**, old inf. of the verb 'to be.'
19. **Ichulle** = I will.
20. **feye** = Scotch 'fey' = doomed, fated. Observe how the dialect of Scotland has preserved the purest forms of Middle English.
21. **nihtes** = nights, at night. The final *s* here is not plural, but the mark of an adverb; so 'ones' = once. The vulgar use of 'Saturdays,' meaning 'every Saturday,' is probably a survival of this.
    wend = turn; still used in poetry, and in the phrase, 'to wend your way.'
22. **for thi** = therefore. **Thi** (*cf.* whi) is the instrumental case of 'this.' 'Forthy, appease your griefe and heavie plight' (Spenser), and compare the hymn, 'For why the Lord our God is good.'
    wonges = cheeks. Ger. *Wange* = cheek.
23. **levedi** = lady. A.S. *hlæfdige*, the English name 'Loveday.'
25. **nis** = ne-is, 'there is not.'
29. **forwake** = worn out with waking or keeping awake. The prefix 'for,' as in forsworn, forlorn, forsake, fordone, is the same as the German *ver*, and means 'to one's detriment.'
30. **Wery so water in wore** = weary as water in a weir, as the water is tossed and tumbled ceaselessly—a common metaphor in contemporary poets.
31. **reve** = rob.
32. **yore** = long; survives in our phrase 'of yore.'
33. **tholien**, to thole is still a Northern dialect word = to bear or endure. The termination 'ien' is the mark of the infinitive, so 'lovien.'
34. **then** = than; originally the same word, the construction being 'this is better, then that.'
35. **gore** = apparel. Originally the word meant a triangular slip of anything, then especially of cloth; still used technically in this sense. A gore-coat was, and remains in Western dialect, the equivalent for our 'petticoat.' In Chaucer we have, 'and slepe under my gore' = 'under my coat.'

IV.—HYMN TO THE VIRGIN.

The carol in English with Latin refrains is a common feature of this period, about 1300 A.D. It is from the Egerton MS. 613.

1. **on** = one. The construction is '[I sing] of one that is . . .'
2. **Velut maris stella**, 'as the sea-star'; a common phrase in carols.
4. **Parens et puella**, mother and maid.
5. **Ic** = I. **thou see** is imperative—'look thou to me.'
7. **tam pia**, Mary so good!
8. **mote** = might.
10. 'Thou art best counsel of care'—*i.e.*, of the sorrowful.
11. 'Happy in thy fruitfulness.'
14. 'Beseech him with mild mood'—*i.e.*, gentle spirit.
15. 'That for us all shed His blood on the cross.'

16. **him**. Possibly, as Mr. Sidgwick suggests, we should read '**God**' to make the rhyme ; this would require the alteration of '**til**' to '**to**,' '**til**' being the form used before a vowel.
17. **in luce** = in light.
19. **forlore**, lost ; Ger. *verloren*. **Eva peccatrice**, through the **sin** of Eve.
21. **de te genetrice**, from thee, his mother.
23. **Ave Maria**, Hail, Mary ! The Angel's salutation, much used in the Roman Church as hymn and prayer. The meaning of these two lines is : 'It—namely, dark night—went away and the day came, when the Angel said, "Hail, Mary !"'
24. **thyster**, dark ; Ger. *düster*, thus marking the change between Ger. *d* and English *th*, according to Grimm's Law.
25. **salutis**, of salvation.
26. **ut** = out.
27. **virtutis**, of virtue.
29. **Rosa sine spina**, rose without a thorn.
30. **Hevene**, possessive—'heaven's.'
31. **gratia divina**, by divine grace.
34. **electa**, chosen.
35. **moder es effecta**, thou art made a mother.

V.—THE SONG OF THE ROSE.

This early fifteenth-century carol is from the Sloane MS. in the British Museum (2593). It is of a curiously mystical character.

3. **Lestenyt**, etc. 'Listen, my lords, both old and young.' The ending of the imperative (2 plur.) is in Chaucer *-eth*.
   ȝynge. The A. S. letter ȝ is to be pronounced as *y* at the beginning, and as *gh* in the middle of a word.
5. **swych**, such. 'I know no rose in all the world so much to my liking.'
7. **hevene tour**, heaven's tower, the citadel of heaven.
8. **grete**, greet ; **gret**, great.
9. 'And said she should bear the flower that should break the fiend's bondage.'
11. **heye**, high ; **Bedlem**, Bethlehem. Our name Bedlam stands for the Bethlehem Hospital.
12. **bryht and schen**, bright and beautiful. For **schen** compare Ger. *schön*.
13. **quyn**, queen.
16 **Cyrstemesse**, Christmas. This is evidently a Christmas carol.
17. **sterre**, star.
20. **fell**—'dash to the ground the fiend's power, that no soul might dwell therein.'
21. **thredde**, third ; **swote**, sweet.
24. **crop and rote**, root and branch.
25. **bote**, salvation. A.S. *bot*, a remedy ; English *booty*.
26. Every day it showed in the hand of the priest.
27, 28. **here** = her ; **che** = she ; **bar** = bore ; **she be**, may she be.

VI.—CAROL.

Another of the many very early Christmas carols; it is of the fifteenth century. The reference is to a medieval legend that Adam was sent to purgatory for 4,000 years, or until Christ's redemption, in consequence of his disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit.

7, 8. 'As scholars find written in their Book.' The Bible, no doubt, is meant, though, of course, no such account is to be found there.
9. **Ne hadde** = had not.
12. **a-ben** = been. This is the past part. prefix in a new form.
15. **Maun**, 'may,' a fuller form of the plural is 'mowen.' This 'maun' survives in Scotland.
6. Thanks to God.

VII.—CAROL.

Another very beautiful carol of the fifteenth century.

2. **Makeless** = mateless or matchless.
3, 4. 'She chose for her son the King of all kings.'
6. Here and in line 14 'there' = where.

VIII.—PRAISE OF WOMEN.

The friars came to England in 1221 and 1224. The first real poet of English, Robert Mannyng, of Brunne, in Lincolnshire, probably a friar, wrote a kind of metrical sermon, 'Handlyng Synne.' This is a free translation from the French of William of Wadington, intended for poor men ignorant of the courtly tongue. The date of the poem is 1303. Like most of the early poems here given, it is in the East Midland dialect, which, being spoken at the two Universities, became after Chaucer the universal literary language of England. Robert Mannyng's style is marked by French words and phrases, doubtless owing to the influence of his French original. In this eloquent extract Mannying has left his original.

2. **in gode manere**, in the honest sense.
4. **there** = where.
6. **nevene** = name.
7. **glew** = gladden.
9. **in Goddis hurde** = in God's flock.

IX.—PROLOGUE AND THE YLE OF CALONAK.

From this prologue we may gather these facts concerning the knight Sir John Mandeville—namely, that he was born at St. Albans in England, and crossed the sea in the year 1322. Modern investigation, however, has put the matter rather differently. The English version, as we have it, is a translation from the French, and the author of that is believed to have been one Jean de Bourgogne, or ad Barbam, who died at Liége in

1372, pretending to be the English knight Mandeville, and using for the purpose a borrowed coat of arms. There was a man of the name Jean de Bourgogne, chamberlain to Baron Mowbray, who fought for the Despensers, and fell with them precisely in the year 1322. It is, therefore, highly probable that this was the man who professed to have left England in that year. Nor are the contents of the book any more genuine than the author. It is largely compiled from real travellers, Vincent de Beauvais and Friar Odoric, with various fables borrowed from Pliny and others. It is not even certain that the author was a traveller at all. Even in his account of Cyprus we find an error founded upon a mistranslation. But the work as it stands is certainly a very early example of good English prose, and was enormously popular in every language of Europe. Indeed, in the number of its manuscripts it is second only to the Bible.

2. **No generalle passage.** The last crusade, in which Edward I. took part, was in 1271.
7. **ȝeer** = year. Throughout this piece the Old English ȝ stands for *y* at the beginning of a word.
11. **Tartarye, etc.** : Russia, Persia, Armenia, Libya, Chaldea, Ethiopia, Amazonia (on the south coast of the Black Sea), India. He confesses, however, in a later chapter that he was never in Tartary himself.
17. **Schappes**, shapes ; of various physical appearance.

The Yle of Calonak. Our guide is here apparently describing the islands of the East Indies, as he has recently mentioned Java. To the early navigator, unable to explore far inland, every place visited was an island. He is plagiarizing, with improvements, from the friar Odoric.

29. **loggen hem**, lodge themselves in their shells. By these 'snayles' he means tortoises, as described by Odoric.
35. **Vyaunde Rialle**, royal meat. Fr. *viande*. Snakes are still eaten in many countries, notably the rattlesnake in America.
36. **ȝif** = if.
38. **alle quyk**, all quick, quite alive. This practice of the Suttee has scarcely now been suppressed in India.
41. **the See Occean**, the sea, ocean—*i.e.*, the Pacific.
43. **seke** = sick. This belief prevails now among the Lhama-Buddhists.
44. **Briddes** = birds.
47. **norysschen** = nourish.
60. Paraphrase : And if two persons quarrel and perchance be reconciled by their friends, or by some of their kindred, each of those that shall be reconciled must drink some of the blood of the others ; otherwise neither the agreement nor the alliance is worth anything, nor shall it be any reproof to him to break the alliance, unless each of them drink some of the other's blood.
79. **elle** = else. 79. **ȝit** = yet. **Vertue** ; precious stones were valued in the Middle Ages for their medicinal or magical properties as much as for their beauty.
86. **Cynocephali**, the existence of a dog-headed tribe is a very ancient traveller's tale. See Pliny, *Natural History*, vi. 30, where he calls

them Cynamolgi. Doubtless the legend originated from statues or idols of monsters such as are found in Egypt.

92. **Targe**, target or shield.

97. **Perles oryent**: Eastern gems being proverbial, the term 'Orient' means 'especially fine' when applied to precious stones.

98. **Pater Nostres**, now called rosaries, used by Roman Catholics and Mahomedans to count their prayers.

101. **or that he ete.** This 'or' is our 'ere' (ever); **or that** = before he eats. Note this use of 'that' after 'because,' 'or,' 'if,' 'when,' 'for,' etc. It is miscalled the redundant that, the truth being that 'that' is the only subordinating conjunction at this period; the others were still only prepositions.

107. **obeyssant**, obedient; a French form.

110. **Cane of Cathay**, the Emperor of China, otherwise called the Great Cham; the word 'Cane' is really Khan.

112. **Godes** = goods.

113. **of equytee in his Doomes**, just in his judgments. Dooms comes from 'demen,' to think. (*Cf.* the Doomsday Book.)

114. **Sykerlyche**, safely. Scotch *syker* = safe; Ger. *sicher*.

115. **what him list**, what he likes. **hardy to robben**, so bold as to rob.

116. **justifyed** is probably a mistake for 'justify it'—that is, judge or punish it immediately.

118. **welle a 800**, quite 800.

119. **fulle mochelle waste**, very much desert.

120. **Cokadrilles**, crocodiles. Our spelling is taken direct from the Greek; the displacement of the 'r' is a common error, called metathesis, often heard in the speech of children or unlettered persons. *Cf.* lipse (lisp), brid (bird).

121. **ȝalowe and rayed aboven**, yellow beneath and wrinkled above (Fr. *raie*, a wrinkle); a correct description.

123. **Clees** = claws.

124. **5 Fadme**, 5 fathoms, 30 feet; an outside estimate!

125. **when they go by places that be gravelly**, a perfectly true description of the crocodiles' tracks.

128. **namelyche of Olyfauntes**, especially of elephants.

135. **forseyde**, aforesaid.

137. **Cannes**, canes, or bamboos probably; Lat. *canna*.

139. **watre Leches**, water-leeches; a kind of slug that fastens to animals or men and sucks their blood, used in surgery for blood-letting.

141. **gadre hem**, gather them.

142. **be weye of Almesse**, by way of alms, or charity.

143. **ynowe**, enough.

146. **Lymons.** The lemon was introduced into Europe from India in the twelfth or thirteenth century; doubtless they were more the size of 'Pesen' (peas) in Mandeville's day.

149. **renneth**, runs (Ger. *rennen*), ebbing and flowing.

159. **witethe wel**, wot ye well, be well assured.

161. **henge**, hung; probably subjunctive.

165. **Psautere**, Psalter, Book of Psalms. 'The waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly' (Ps. xciii. 5).

X.—THE VISION OF WILLIAM CONCERNING PIERS THE PLOWMAN—PROLOGUE.

For the life of Langland or Langley, the author of this satirical poem, see the Introduction.

The Metre.—This is the only example here presented of what was the original form of Early English or Anglo-Saxon poetry—namely, alliteration, and not rhyme. The principles of it are mainly these:

(1) The complete line is divided about the middle by a pause, here marked with a point (·), though the two halves are sometimes written as separate lines. This point often does duty for a comma or larger stop; it nearly always represents some pause in the line.

(2) Each half of the line normally has two *loud* (or accented) syllables; the first half sometimes has more than two, and the second half rarely.

(3) The dominant sound or *rime-letter* (as Skeat calls it) appears in two of the loud syllables in the first half and in one in the second, as a sort of echo.

These principles will be made clearer by an examination of the first ten lines of the text, in which the dominant sounds are printed in italics. Often there is an extra one or two in the line, but this is accidental. For a fuller discussion of this subject the student is referred to Skeat's edition in the Clarendon Press Series.

2. 'I shaped myself in clothes like a shepherd'; for shepe = shepherd, *cf.* message for messenger in Chaucer.
3. 'in garb like a hermit.' The author's bad opinion of hermits and wandering friars finds expression again (l. 54).
5. **Maluerne hulles**, Malvern hills, where the author is supposed to have spent his boyhood. The scenes of the poem are, however, for the most part laid in London.
6. 'A wonder befel me; I thought it a wonder of fairy-land.' Fairy or Faerie stands for fairy-land.
7. **Forwandred**, tired out with wandering. *Cf.* 'for wowyng alle forwaked' in III. 29.
   Went me. Went is here the past tense of 'wenden,' to **turn.**
   bornes side, burn or bourn, a stream. *Cf.* Eastbourne.
10. **Sweyued so merye**, sounded so merry.
11. **meten**, to dream; **sweuene**, a dream (swoon).
12. 'Gazed into the east on high to the sun.'
13. 'I saw a tower on a hill, choicely built.' 'Toft' is our 'tuft.'
14. **trielich**, from Fr. *trier*, to pick out.
19. 'As the world demands.'
20. 'seldom played,' seldom took a holiday.
21. 'worked very hard in planting and sowing, and earned money that wasters destroy with gluttony.'
23. 'and some gave themselves to pride, dressed themselves according to pride's demands, coming dressed in strange appearance of clothes.'
26. lived full strictly. *Cf.* 'the strait gate' and the geographical term 'straits.'
27. **heveneriche**, 'of the kingdom of heaven'; Ger., *Reich*, a kingdom.
28. 'as anchorites and hermits that keep themselves in their cells, and care not to wander about in the country for any luxurious liveli-

hood to please their body.' **Ancren** is an anchorite (from Greek *ἀναχωρεῖν*, to retire). There is an early prose work called the *Ancren Riwle*, or Rule of Anchoresses.

31. 'And some choose commerce; they succeed (achieve) better; as it seems to our sight that such men thrive.'
33. 'And some know how to make fun as minstrels and get gold with their glees (songs), harmless, I allow.'
35. 'But jesters and chatterers, children of the accursed Judas, fashion fantastic tales and make fools of themselves, and yet have sense enough at command to work if they are obliged to.'
38. 'What St. Paul preaches about then I will not prove here: "he who speaks foul speech is Lucifer's servant" '—apparently referring to Eph. v. 4 or Col. iii. 8, in the first of which the word *stultiloquium* appears among the sins condemned, and the second contains, according to Tertullian, this word *turpiloquium*, a very rare word. It seems best to suppose that the author is quoting freely or from some false text of St. Paul's Epistles. His quotations from the Bible are nearly always given in Latin. Skeat's explanation is different, and may be given thus: 'I will not adduce here what St. Paul preaches about such people (referring, as one MS. suggests in the margin, to the well-known text, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat"), for he who speaks evil is Lucifer's servant.' But how on this theory explain the Latin quotation? And it is strange to suppose that our author would call the well-deserved reproof of these ne'er-do-wells *turpiloquium*, foul-speaking.

hyne = hind, servant.

40. **Bidders** = beggars. (*Cf.* Ger. *beten*, to ask.)

yede = went, from A.S. *ge-ode*.

42. 'told falsehoods for their food, fought at the ale,' or alehouse.
44. **the roberdes knaves**. Robertsmen were robbers, possibly, as Coke suggested, from Robin Hood. A statute of Edward III. refers to 'divers manslaughters, felonies and robberies done by people that be called Roberdesmen, wastours and drawlacches.'
45. 'Sleep and sorry sloth pursueth them ever.'
46. A Palmer was a professional pilgrim who went from one shrine to another and lived on charity. See Scott's *Marmion*, I., 23.
47. **Seynt James**; in Spanish, 'Santiago.' His shrine at Compostella in Galicia was a famous place of pilgrimage. See Southey's poem of 'The Pilgrim to Compostella' (Skeat).
50. 'I saw some that said they had sought saints.'
52. **sooth** = truth.
53. 'Hermits in heaps with their crooks went to Walsingham.' This shrine, next to Canterbury, was the most popular resort of pilgrims in England. Henry VIII. did penance at the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. It was in Norfolk, and remains of it are still to be seen.
55. **lobyes**, loobies, lubbers—'that were unwilling to labour.'
56. 'Clothed themselves in copes to be known from others, and arrayed themselves (as) hermits to have their ease.'
58. 'Friars, all the four orders,' namely, Carmelites, Augustines, Dominicans, and Minorites. The friars came to England about 1221.

61. 'glossed the Bible as they liked best.' A 'gloss' is a note or explanation, hence 'glossary.' **'As them liked.'** Note the impersonal construction of like = please.
62. 'In their desire for copes'—that is, to become monks.
63. 'Many of these Master Friars may dress as they like, for their money and traffic go together. Since charity has turned pedlar, and succeeded in shriving lords, many marvels have happened in a few years. Unless Holy Church and they hold better together, the greatest mischief in the world is arising very fast.' The friars were supposed to be without money, but as Piers complains and Chaucer hints (Prologue, 224, etc.), they made a fortune out of their absolutions, and trafficked in remission of sins:

> 'For though a widow haddë not a shoe
> So pleasant was his *in principio*,
> Yet would he have a farthing ere he went.'
> 'The Frere,' in Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*.

66. For **but** = 'except,' 'unless.' *Cf.* III. 17. **Holichirche** is throughout this poem the author's personified ideal of the true Church founded on the Gospel in contrast to his contempt for Rome and its system. Piers Plowman is a Nonconformist at heart, many centuries before his time.
68. **Pardonere**. See Chaucer's Pardoner in the Prologue, who travelled with a wallet 'bret-ful of pardon come from Rome all hot,' and a quantity of sham relics. The Bishops granted written absolutions or indulgences (for a price) to these itinerant quacks, who retailed them at a profit.
71. **Falshed of fasting** means 'breaking the vows of fasting.'
72. **lewed** means unlettered = laymen.
75. **Blered their eyes**, threw dust in their eyes, deceived them.
Brevet, his patent of appointment; so we speak of a 'brevet rank.'
Ragman, or ragman-roll (from which is derived 'rigmarole'), means a list of names. Here stands for the Papal Bull with its Bishops' seals.
76. **kepe** = remain.
77. **Worth both his ears**, a curious phrase, apparently meaning 'worth his salt.'
82. **pleyned them**, complained.
84. **pestilence time** probably refers to the Black Death, 1348.
85. **sing there for simony.** To sing means here to importune, keep on asking. Simony (the word is derived from Simon Magus, who tried to bribe St. Peter) is the corrupt assignment of clerical offices. 'Absenteeism' has often been a scandal in the English Church.
86. **Bachelors** are novices in the Church.
87. **Crowning** is the tonsure, or shaving of the head.
92. **In Chequer and Chancery**: **Chequer** = Exchequer. History offers many instances of Churchmen holding high political appointments, and *vice versâ*. **Tell** = count.
challenge means to claim; the city of London still has its *wards*, or divisions, with their *wardmotes* or councils. **Waifs and strays** refers to lost property, cattle and the like; it also includes the estate of strangers which at their death reverted to the King.
95. **demen**, to judge.

96. **hours** are services at stated intervals, such as nones, complines, etc.
98. **Consistory** is the term, still used, for an ecclesiastical court; here it is finely used for the Last Judgment.

XI.—THE VISION OF WILLIAM CONCERNING PIERS THE PLOWMAN—PASSUS V.

William wakes and sees a new vision at this point, a vision of Seven Deadly Sins—Pride, Luxury, Envy, Anger, Covetousness, Gluttony, Sloth. This little comedy of Gluttony is in the author's liveliest manner, and marks him as an allegorist with the power of Bunyan.

2. **kairen** is to go, to betake yourself; Ger. *kehren*. **coupe**, sin; Lat. *culpa*.
7. **assay**, try; Fr. *essayer*.
8. **purse** is here a bag, not for money, but for spices as a relish to the ale.
9. **piones**, pæony seeds; fennel-seed is humorously described as a sort of Lenten spice suitable for Fridays. The inn here described has been identified by Skeat with Shakespeare's Boar's Head in Eastcheap. The identity is, however, very vaguely described. We gather that it was near Cock's Lane, Cheapside, and Garlic Hithe. This is a large area, and must have included numbers of churches and inns. It is not even certain that William means any particular inn or church.
12. **Cis the souteresse.** Cis is, as now, short for Cicely or Cecilia; **souteresse** is a shoemaker's wife. Lat. *sutor*.
13. **Wat the warrener**: **Wat** is short for Walter; **warrener** is a rabbit-catcher.
15. **hackneyman**, later called hosteller or ostler; he would let out horses on hire. **needler** is a seller, perhaps maker, of needles.
16. **Cock's Lane** may still be found by turning off Holborn by St. Sepulchre's Church, which may have been Glutton's church; at the corner of this street is the famous Pie Corner, where the Fire of London stopped.
17. **Daw the ditcher**: **Daw** (as in 'Dawson') is short for David; he was a digger of ditches.
18. **Peronelle of Flanders.** Flemish women were forbidden to live in the City.
19. **A ribibour, a ratoner.** The first is a player on the *rebeck*, a kind of fiddle; the second a rat-catcher. **raker of Chepe** means a scavenger of Cheapside, or West Cheap.
20. **A roper**, etc.; a rope-maker, a mounted retainer, and Rose the dish-seller.
21. **Garlickhithe** is on the Thames, about the site of the present Cannon Street Station.
22. **Upholders**, sellers of second-hand clothes and furniture, whence our 'upholsterers.'
23. **to handsel** for a bribe or a treat; to handsel is to give something into the hand, to try or use a thing.
25. This is rather a difficult piece. Apparently Clement the cobbler takes off his cloak and declares that he wants to sell it at the New Fair (the Evecheping); then Hicke the ostler throws his hood down and asks Bette the butcher to support him in making a bargain. Salesmen are appointed to value the goods, so that the hood should

be exchanged for the cloak. Two such salesmen rose up in haste and whispered together, but they could not agree, so Robin the roper appointed himself umpire, so that there should be no more discussion. The bargain effected was that Clement should receive the hood in exchange for his cloak and a cup of ale. There was to be an amusing penalty for the man who repented soonest.

29. **should have amends of the cloke**—*i.e.*, should have the cloak in return for it.
35. **them three**—namely, himself, Hikke, and Clement.
38. **Hikke's hood hosteller**—*i.e.*, Hikke the ostler's hood. To this construction Dr. Morris compares 'It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general' (Shakespeare), and 'For the Queen's sake her sister' (Byron). To which we may add the collect ending 'For Christ's sake, our Lord.'
38. **hold him y-served**, consider himself requited.
43. **y-globbed**, gulped down.
45. **like a gleeman's bitch**, gleemen were generally blind, and were led by a dog.
47. 'like a man setting snares to catch fowls'; he kept retracing and crossing his footsteps like a man spreading a net.
54. **Accidie**, Lat. *accidia*, a fit of sloth.

XII.—PROLOGUE (CHAUCER).

The Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, of which the opening lines are here given, was probably the last written, and is certainly the most popular part of the whole work. It is of such documentary value in its faithful portraiture of the men and women of that day, and of such literary value in the exquisitely delicate and humorous descriptions, that it deserves, and generally obtains, special study. It has, however, been thought desirable to give the opening lines here to show the scheme of the whole work, and give the setting for the next piece. For the life of Chaucer see the Introduction. The text is taken with some typographical alterations from Skeat's Clarendon Press Edition, to which the present writer is much indebted in the notes.

1. 'When that (for the construction see IX., 101) April with his sweet showers hath pierced the dryness of March to the root.'
3. And hath bathed every vein of natural life with such moisture that flowers are produced by the virtue or power of it.'
6. **holt** = wood (Ger. *Holz*), survives in many country names.
8. 'Hath run his half course in the sign of the Ram.' The circuit of the sun through the year beginning in March was mapped out by astrologers into the various signs of the Zodiac—'the Ram, the Bull, the Heavenly Twins,' etc. April is half in the sign of the Ram (Aries) and half in that of the Bull (Taurus). The sun has now completed the Ram-half—*i.e.*, it is past April 11.
10. **yë** = eyes.
11. 'So nature stirs them in their feelings.'
13. **strondes, londes** = strands (shores) and lands.
14. **fernë halwës** = far shrines; Ger. *fern*. **halwes** (as in Allhallows) = saints.

couthe = well-known, past participle of A.S. *cunnan*, to know.

17. **martir**, Thomas à Becket, martyred in 1170, is now St. Thomas of Canterbury.
18. **seke**, sick; observe that according to the spelling this word rhymes with itself.
20. **Tabard**, a herald's short coat; here as the sign of a large inn. The host was named Henry Baily.
25. 'Fallen by accident into fellowship' (or company).
29. **esed atte beste**, entertained in the best manner; **atte** = at the.
31. **everichon**, every one.
33. **forward**, agreement.

XIII.—THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

He is thus described in the Prologue:

> 'A Sergeant of the Lawe, wary and wise, . . .
> There was also, full rich of excellence,
> Discreet he was and of great reverence. . . .
> He rode but homely in a medley coat
> Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres small.'

And he knew all the laws from the time of King William. It is curious that a tale so full of tenderness and piety should be put into his mouth. The reader should not fail to observe the consummate art with which the story is told—indeed, there is none of the *Canterbury Tales* which can match it in point of human interest and pathos. The story of Constance, as usual in Chaucer, is a borrowed one. About 1334, some forty years earlier, one Nicholas Trivet wrote the Life of Constance in his *Anglo-Norman Chronicle*, for Mary, daughter of Edward I. Upon this account Chaucer's story is modelled, with some additions and much compression. Gower and Occleve also made use of it a little later. It is a tale of semi-historical romance, of beauty and virtue persecuted by malevolence but finally triumphant—which, after all, might serve as a summary of all the romantic stories that ever were written.

2. 'Of merchants rich and also sober and honest.' The word 'sad,' in its passage from 'staid' or 'sober' to 'unhappy,' exhibits the same deterioration as the word 'silly'—from 'blessed' to 'foolish.'
3. **wyde-where**, widely, everywhere.
5. **chaffer**, *subst.* merchandize; *verb* to buy and sell.
11. **message** = messenger, as *shepe* = shepherd (X., 2).
12. **this is th' end.** A common phrase in Chaucer = Fr. *enfin*, in short.
13. **avantage** is thus pronounced throughout Chaucer.
24. **God him see** = God protect him. The Emperor was Tiberius Constantine, who ruled at Constantinople (not Rome) A.D. 578.
31. **without griefhed or folly**, neither austere nor giddy. This stanza is a fine example of our author's power in drawing character, and Constance may stand without fear among the finest heroines of all literature.
36. **almesse**, alms (as in IX., 142), or charity.
38. **done fraught**, 'got freighted,' as 'do fetch,' l. 466. 'Fraught' is the past participle of the verb 'to freight.' For other examples of this idiom see Skeats.
41. **yore**, for a long time; **weal**, welfare, as in commonweal.
43. **grace** = favour; **Sowdan** = Sultan.

48. **lere** = learn.
52. **seriously**, or, as Chaucer spells it, 'ceriously' = minutely.
57. **thilkë** = that; still survives in Scotland.
63. **dread** = doubt. The pages of Chaucer are as full of astrological beliefs as those of Livy in augury and omens.
65. In the Siege of Troy Hector was the principal champion of Troy, but was finally slain by Achilles, the best warrior of the Greeks.
66. Pompey and Julius Cæsar were the two great rivals of the civil war, B.C. 50, in which Cæsar triumphed.
67. **The strife of Thebes**, in which seven Athenian heroes fought with seven Thebans and two brothers slew each other, was the subject of Æschylus' great play, *The Seven against Thebes*, and of many a Greek legend.
Hercules and **Samson** represent two strong men of antiquity.
Turnus was the Italian Prince defeated by Æneas, as told by Virgil.
Socrates, the greatest of Greek philosophers, immortalized by Plato.
72. **pace** = pass—*i.e.*, to pass over this matter.
74. **but** = unless, as commonly.
77. **hye** = haste.
81. **abusion** = imposture (Fr.)—*i.e.*, they suggest the employment of magic or trickery.
91. **Mahoun** = Mahomet, who was not born until 560 A.D. As the Emperor of Rome meant in this story, Tiberius II., died in 582, the idea of Syria as already a Mahometan country is an anachronism.
96. **reckeless** = reckless, or careless of my interests.
97. **in cure** = in her care.
99. **dilatation** = delay; to dilate is to enlarge upon a subject.
103. **Mahometry** or, as Chaucer spells it, **Maumetry**, means idolatry, from Middle English *Maumet* = an idol. The Mahometans, however, are not, and never were, worshippers of idols; their law does not permit any representation of the human figure.
109. **Not** = ne-wot, I know not.
113. **waiten** = expect; **purveyance** = provision.
118. **clause** = sentence.
126. **in gree** = in favour. Fr. *à son gré* = to his taste; Lat. *gratia*.
130. 'Straightway they address (or prepare) themselves collectively and severally.'
134. Do not miss the beauty and pathos of these stanzas.
139. Ironical.
144. **Outtaken** = except; Lat. *ex-*, out, *-ceptum*, taken.
151. **hestes** = behests, commands.
152. **No force though I spill**, no matter though I perish; **spill** = spoil, be destroyed. For this phrase, 'no force,' *Cf.* Chaucer, *Dethe of Blanche*, 522: '"A! goode sir, no fors," quod I.' It survived till 1494, Fabyan, Chron. VII., 575: 'What force though Sathan do him reward?' Four stanzas narrating the power of the stars to predict fortunes in various classical cases are omitted here for brevity, and because they contain serious difficulties.
159. **paineth her**, makes an effort to look cheerful.
164. **let** = leave.

167. **in fere** = in company.
170. 'is on the point of leaving.'
171. **Alkaroun**, Al Koran, is the Book of Mahomet, the bible of Moslems. **Al** is the Arabic article, as in 'alchemy' and 'almanac.'
172. **message.** See l. 11.
173. **het** = promise ; A.S. *hátan*, to command or promise.
174. **rather**, comparative of *rathe* = soon.
176. **betide us of**, happen to us from.
179. 'Because we denied Mahomet, our belief.'
186. **fond** = find.
187. 'enterprise taken in hand.'
191. **lite** = little.
193. **quite** = requite.
198. **Virago**, first a warrior woman (as Camilla in Virgil) ; then a woman, unnaturally fierce and cruel. Semiramis, Queen of Nineveh, a wonderful female general and sovereign, who is said to have murdered her husband.
200. The serpent of the Garden of Eden, according to legend and art, put on a female head in disguise.
209. **Weylaway the while!** alas! the time! **Weylaway**, afterwards 'Wellaway,' is an interjection from Anglo-Saxon, *Wa, la, wa!* = Woe, lo, woe! ; **while** = time, as in 'worth while.'
211. **wary** = curse.
215. **lay** = belief ; from Lat. *legem*, law.
216. **fong** = take, receive ; Ger. *fangen*, to catch.
223. **nist** = ne-wist, knew not.

The first part ends. The second part follows.

226. **rout** = company, train, assembly.
227. **sond** = message ; a noun derived from the verb 'to send.'
229. **out of doubt** = without doubt.
230. **against** = beside.
240. The allusion is to the Roman poet Lucan, whose *Pharsalia* deals with the war between Cæsar and Pompey. I do not know to what passage of Lucan he here refers.
241. **curious** means the result of care.
243. **ghost**, spirit, soul.
245. **cast**, contrived.
251. **stint**, leave off, cease ; a neuter verb here.
261. **spreyned**, sprinkled ; so 'besprent' in modern poetry.
263. **fyn** = end ; **sikerness**, security.
266. **unaware** = unexpected.
269. **to-hewn.** The prefix *to-* is intensive in Anglo-Saxon ; therefore, **to-hewn** is hewn in pieces. **sticked**, stabbed or pierced.
276. **ere he asterted**, before he escaped ; **ere** is written **or** in Chaucer's spelling. To **stert** is to start ; **a** = away.
277. **foot-hot**, and **hot-foot** (for both phrases occur in Chaucer) mean immediately.
278. **steerless** = rudderless ; 'steer' ('stere') is in Chaucer both the rudder and the steersman. This story of putting the offender to sea instead of killing her is found in many legends, as that of Danaë. Doubtless the design was to save blood-guiltiness. Observe that in this line 'wot' has to rhyme with itself. This, which would

now be regarded as an error, occurs several times in Chaucer. *Cf.* line 782.

290. **wellful**, or 'wealful,' means full of blessing.
296. 'Through the Mediterranean to the Straits of Morocco or Gibraltar.'
298. **bait** is 'to feed,' here intransitive; we use it actively, 'to bait your horse.'
301. **thereas** = whereas, or where.
306. **knave**, servant. Was eaten by the lion before he could escape.
Four stanzas giving other examples of how God saves His servants are here for brevity omitted.
311. **hold** = castle, stronghold.
312. **Northumberland**, not our county of that name, but the whole district, from Humber to Tweed. This, according to the French version, was in Yorkshire.
314. in a whole tide, neither at high nor at low water.
316. Constable (the latter part to be pronounced short, almost as a word of two syllables), according to Gower and Trivet, was named Elda. A constable was the warden of a stronghold, a high officer under the King of Northumbria.
321. **to twin** is to separate; she begs him to kill her.
323. The hero of the modern novel is never confronted by the linguistic difficulty. Chaucer is more conscientious. She spoke a kind of corrupt Latin, but anyhow (**algates**) she was understood thereby.
326. 'When he no longer cared to seek.' Observe how common this impersonal construction is in old English—me thought, him liked, him list, meseems.
329. 'for good or bad, even under threat of death.'
341. **orisons** = prayers.
344. **rout** = assemble, gather.
347. **plages**, Lat. *plăga*, a district.
351. **nere** = ne-were, were not.
370. Chaucer's spelling of 'work' and 'kirk' is 'werche' and 'chirche.'
372. **abashéd** = disconcerted, astonished.
373. 'What is the meaning of these goings on?' **Fare**, the noun, means 'a going' as the verb means 'to go.' *Cf.* our word 'thoroughfare.'
376. **so ferforth** = to such a degree.
380. **there** = where
382. **Alla** or Aella, a historical person; he was King of Northumbria, A.D. 560-567. The pun made upon his name by Gregory will be remembered.
383. **worthy of his hand** means that he was a good fighter.
388. **quite her while**, requite her time—*i.e.*, reward her trouble. *Cf.* l. 209.
395. **for despite**, out of vexation.
With the treachery of this knight compare the story of Iachimo and Cymbeline in Shakespeare's play.
400. **forwaked.** See III., 29.
418. **agryse**, to shudder; connected with 'grisly.'
420. **dis-ease**, trouble, discomfort.
424. **beareth in hand**, to bear in hand (Fr. *maintenir*, whence our 'maintain'), is to affirm; in Chaucer always with an idea of false-

hood ; in Shakespeare, Cymb. V. v. 43 : 'Your daughter whom she bore in hand to love'; it means 'pretended.'

432. **hath caught a great motive**, has perceived his great motive.

437. **starf** = died. It is only later that 'to starve' gains its modern connotation of 'dying by hunger.' It is the German *sterben*, to die.

438. The subject to **lieth** is **he** (Satan) ; that is ; Satan still lies in hell, whither Christ descended to bind him.

440. **kythe** = should show ; subjunctive of the Anglo-Saxon *cythan*, to make known ; **as swythe**, as quickly as possible. The two lines then mean, 'For unless Christ should show an open miracle, although guiltless, thou shalt be slain at once.'

443. The story of Susannah, and how she was saved from a false accusation by the wisdom of Daniel, is in the Apocrypha.

448. **elles**, else, otherwise.

449. A stanza of extraordinary beauty.

451. 'Where he has no chance of mercy.'

453. **bestead**, hard beset, in great peril.

468. **us advise**, a legal term. *Le Roi s'avisera* means the rejection of a measure ; *lit.*, 'the King will consider.' The two lines mean, 'We will yet consider whom we will choose to be our judge of this matter.'

470. **a Briton book**, a copy of the Gospels in British (or Welsh).

475. **brast** = burst.

478. **disclaundered** = slandered.

483. **Wreche** = revenge ; Ger. *Rache*.

486. **sely** = blessed ; Ger. *selig*. This is our word 'silly' in its first sense ; its second is 'simple'; so 'the silly sheep.'

490. **sheen** = beautiful. See V., 12.

504. **make** = mate.

505. 'I do not wish to talk at length about the chaff and straw —*i.e.*, the unessential details.

508. **course** at the feast.

512. **knave child**, a boy ; Ger. *Knabe*.

513. **fontstone**, at his baptism.

514. **doth forth come**, causes to come forth ; so 'do fetch' in l. 460.

519. 'for his own convenience.'

523. **sythe** = times.

530. **Donegild** is to be pronounced here as two syllables.

533. **sadly** = steadily, deeply.

544. **elf** = a witch, or malevolent fairy.

552. **lust** = pleasure.

557. **ágreable** here has the French pronunciation, as 'lettre' and 'horrible' above.

564. **lorn** = lost ; **janglest** = chatterest.

568. **dign** = fit, worthy ; Lat. *dignus*.

570. **inditen**, tell. *Cf.* 'My heart is inditing of a good matter.'

572. means 'Shame upon thee, unwomanly—nay, I am wrong—fiendish spirit!' **Parfay**, Fr. *par foi*, by my faith.

579. **underpight**, pitched under—*i.e.*, stowed much wine under his belt.

580. **in his guise**, after his own fashion.

582. **eft** = again.

588. 'three days and a quarter of an hour'; **tide** here = time—*i.e.*, she was to be banished at the very beginning of the fourth day.
591. **crowd** = push.
599. **sey** = saw.
610. What in all literature can match the simple beauty of these stanzas?
627. **breyd** = drew.
632. **eggement**, incitement, persuasion. The phrase which we sometimes use 'to egg a person on' is neither metaphor nor slang. The word is often used of the Fall.
640. **all woeful** = all people in trouble.
641. **may** = maid, as in *Alisoun*.
643. **rue on** = have pity on, as 'ruth' is pity.
645. **pardé** = par Dieu.
648. here 'Constable' is three syllables.
649. **as let**, 'as' in this sense is only used to introduce a wish.
659. **it is no dread**, there is do doubt.
661. **need**, passive here in meaning, 'that should be necessary.'
662. **heried** = praised. A.S. *hérian*, to praise.
663. **purchase** = provide.

The second part ends. The third part follows.

669. 'went cold about his heart.'
674. **up pain**, upon pain.
675. **tormented**, tortured; the usual way of cross-examining a witness in those days.
677. **beknow**, acknowledge; **plat**, flatly, openly.
683. **out of dread**, without doubt.
692. 'as pleased Christ's sending'—*i.e.*, as Christ chose to send.
693. In the stanzas here omitted she casts a treacherous stranger into the sea and escapes.
695. **Jubaltar** is, of course, Gibraltar, and **Septe** is Ceuta on the opposite coast, so that she is once more miraculously driven through the Straits of 'Marrok.'
701. 'Let us leave Constance for a moment.'
707. **More and less**, great and small.
730. 'She (Helen, the Senator's wife) did not recognise Constance any the more, though she was her aunt.'
740. **in high and low**, in all matters great and small.
745. **harbingers**. Chaucer spells this 'herbergeours,' which, connected with 'auberge,' means providers of lodgings, and so messengers sent on in advance to provide accommodation; hence we speak of the swallow as the 'harbinger of spring.'
747. **him against**, beside him, as in l. 230.
760. **at the least**, anyhow, there he was. 'Some men would say' refers to Trivet's French version, from which Chaucer takes the story, and not to Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, which does contain these details, but was probably written a little later than Chaucer's tale.
769. 'that I know of.' **Stound**, an hour, as Ger. *Stund*.
775. **aught**, at all, in any possible way.
777. **that he might**—*i.e.*, as soon as he could.
779. '"I ought to suppose, by correct reasoning, that my wife is dead"; but afterwards he began to argue. . . .'
782. Observe **sent** rhyming with itself in the next line. Though Chaucer

writes 'ysent' (according to one M.S.) in the first place, and 'sente' in the next, it is none the less a blemish.

786. **wonder** is here an adjective.

789. 'You may be quite sure that she did not want to dance,' did not feel gay. This figure of speech, 'litŏtes,' or saying much less than you mean, has come in our days to have a comic use. Chaucer did not mean it so.

791. **Unnethe** = hardly; 'ethe' is the same word as 'ease.'

792. **gret** = greeted.

799. **Twiës** = twice, as 'onës' = once.

801. **hallows**, saints (see XII., 14).

802. **as have**, may he have (see l. 649). The construction is rather complicated: 'May God have mercy on my soul so surely (wisely), as I am not more guilty of hurting you than is my son Maurice, who is so like your face.'

808. **plain** = complain, lament.

810. Here we may fancy the Man of Lawe speaking.

821. **pine**, starvation.

827. **Some men would say** (see l. 760). The same is true of this passage.

829. **nice** = foolish, ignorant; perhaps from Lat. *nescius*. The history of this word is remarkable. The meaning is, 'Alla was not so ignorant of good manners as to send a child to one of such high rank as the Emperor, the flower of Christendom.'

839. **Arrayéd**. Neither this word nor **dress** in l. 841 has any special reference to clothing; they only mean 'prepare.'

849. **him to feet**, at his feet; a German idiom now.

850. **it am I.** This is the old idiom of Chaucer's day, curiously revived in modern America. We should now write 'I am she.'

858. **let** here means 'tarry,' 'delay.'

861. Five stanzas here for brevity omitted tell of the subsequent fate of the characters; how Mauricius was made Emperor (he ruled from A.D. 582-602); how Alla died shortly afterwards, and Constance returned to her father in Rome.

864. **departeth**, used transitively = to part. So in the Marriage Service the words 'Till death us do part' should be 'till death us depart.'

XIV.—LAMENT FOR CHAUCER.

Chaucer founded a school of metrical romancers, amongst them Hoccleve or Occleve, Lydgate and the unknown author of the *Owl and the Nightingale*, with various other poems which have been erroneously ascribed to the master himself. Thomas Occleve lived from about 1370 to 1448, and though his work is for the most part undistinguished, there is in this little selection a note of loyalty and devotion which makes it well worthy of inclusion here. His longest poem is the *Governail of Princes*.

4. 'her revengeful harshness.' Observe that Death is here, as in Latin, feminine.

6. **rethoryk** = rhetoric, which means more than oratory; it includes what we call style or expression, and a great deal more.

7. **Tullius**. Marcus Tullius Cicero, the great Roman orator. It is only

in quite modern times that he has been known by his nickname or cognomen, Cicero.

8. **heyr** = heir. This is rather an exaggerated claim.
11. 'men know well enough.'
12. **combre-worlde** = cumber-world, encumberer of earth ; **slow** = slew.
13. **hastyf**. This is simply the French word *hâtif*, hasty.
14. 'to run upon thee and rob thee of thy life.'
17. **let be that** ; he corrects himself : 'No, I don't mean that !'
19. 'And she must of necessity do her duty'; **mote** = must (past tense).

XV.—THE KINGIS QUAIR.

Quair is our word 'quire' (of paper), and means 'a book.' The King was James I. of Scotland, one of the most romantic figures in history. King Robert III. of Scotland had two sons, of whom the elder, Duke of Rothesay, was cruelly murdered by the plotting of his uncle the Duke of Albany. Robert therefore determined to send his younger son, James, to France for education and safety. At the age of ten the young Prince set out, but his ship was treacherously attacked by the English in time of peace, and the young Prince captured and lodged in the Tower. The shock of the news killed his father, but though nominally King of Scotland now, James was held prisoner for eighteen long years. Undoubtedly he profited by his captivity in some ways, for he was well educated, and learnt to love Chaucer and Gower, to whom he dedicates his book. This extract tells us how his 'quair' came to be written. Looking out of his tower-window at Windsor he beheld a beautiful lady playing in the garden, and loved her from that moment. She was Lady Joan Beaufort, cousin to the King, Henry VI. She returned his love, and in 1423 they were married. As this marriage seemed to attach him to the English throne, the Scots were allowed to ransom him, and he returned to Scotland. He made an excellent King, enforcing law and justice even upon the turbulent Highland chiefs, which ultimately cost him his life. At the instigation of another wicked uncle, Earl of Atholl, he was treacherously attacked by 300 Highlanders while lodging in a monastery at Perth, and though Catherine Douglas heroically endeavoured to secure his escape by thrusting her own arm through the staples of the door in place of the stolen pin, he was found and slain in 1437 after thirteen years' beneficent reign.

Two other poems of a humorous character have been ascribed to him, but, according to Professor Skeat, falsely, and this, with a ballade, is the only monument of his undoubted literary ability. It is a poem of nearly 200 stanzas, closely modelled on the style and language of Chaucer. Indeed, though the spelling bears the Northern characteristics (*quh* for *wh*, *-is* for *-s* and *-es*, and generally for verbs in the present tense, and *-it* for *-ed*), yet the syntax and grammar are of Chaucer's East Midland or southern dialect, as has been well shown by Professor Skeat, from whom this text has been adapted. *The King's Quair* was edited by him for the Scottish Text Society, and published by Blackwood in 1884.

1. Closely imitated from Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*.
3. **fortirit**, *cf.* 'forwaked.' This ending *-it*, for *-ed*, may still be heard in the Scottish dialect ; *cf. The Stickit Minister*.
4. **hye**, haste (see XIII., 76).

6. **as for the time**, just for the moment. 'Though I might have no food of mirth (being a prisoner) it did me good to look.'
8. **maid** = made ; **fast by** = close by.
10. **herbere**, Lat. *herbarium*, a lawn and shrubbery.
11. **treis** = trees.
12. **hegis knet**, hedges knit.
13. **lyf** = person. 'That there was no person walking past there who could see anyone (scarcely) within.'
15. **bewis**, boughs.
16. **aleyes**, alleys, garden walks.
17. **myddis**, amidst.
18. **Ienepere**, juniper, an evergreen shrub.
22. **twistis**, twigs.
24. **ympnis**, hymns.
25. **lufis**, love's use or practice ; **among**, from time to time, in XVI., 1.
27. **right**, exactly ; **copill** = couplet or stanza—*i.e.* 'in the next stanza (I speak) of their sweet harmony, and lo ! here is the text of it.' **Cantus**, Lat., song.
28. In Chaucer's grammar **Worschippë** would be 'worshippeth.' The sense is, I think, 'worship all ye that be lovers this spring-time'; though Skeat takes 'this May' as object to 'worship.'
30. **the kalendis**, the kalends in the Latin calendar are the first five or seven days of the month. He means, 'the lovers' month has now begun.'
33. **hevynnis**, heavens ; 'that have won your heavens'—*i.e.*, found happiness.
35. 'Thank Love that chose to call you to his mercy.'
36. **kest** = cast.
37. **quhare as**, whereas or where ; *quh* represents the Northern pronunciation of *wh* which puts a strong aspirate before the *w*.
38. **cummyn** = comen, past participle ; **pleyne** = play.
41. **abate anon astert**, retired and then started up.
43. **abaisit**, abased ; **tho** = then ; **lyte** = little.
44. **forquhy**, because. See III., 22.
48. 'for there was no token of menace in her sweet face.'
50. 'And soon I leaned it forth again.'
52. *So* very womanly.
53. 'with no other person, but only two women.'
54. **seyne** = say.
55. **warldly**, a creature of this earth.

XVI.—THE NUT-BROWN MAID.

This remarkable poem—a dramatic lyric, intended doubtless to be recited by two persons—'occurs in the farrago known as the *Chronicle* of Richard Arnold, inserted between a list of the "tolls" due on merchandise entering or leaving the port of Antwerp, and a table giving Flemish weights and moneys in terms of the corresponding English measures. Why such a poem should be printed in such incongruous surroundings, what its date, or who its author was, are questions impossible to determine' (F. Sidgwick, *Popular Ballads*, First Series). The text is said to have been *printed* at Antwerp in 1502. The 'argument' is as follows : A man

and a woman discuss the characteristics of the female sex, the man for purposes of argument declaring that they are fickle, the woman that they are true. At l. 30 they assume characters: the man takes the part of a knight, who comes to his mistress, a baron's daughter, to announce that he has been banished. The woman takes up her part (l. 43), and announces her determination to follow his fortunes. The bulk of the poem is then devoted to the trial of this determination, the man throwing every obstacle in the way of her purpose, and the woman courageously overcoming every obstacle. At the end her constancy is rewarded; the 'banished knight,' or 'squire of low degree,' announces that he is not really banished, but is an 'earl's son,' and that his disguise was merely a trial of her faith. The last stanza is an epilogue or 'moral.' It will thus appear that there is no primitive simplicity about this poem. The plot is amazingly clever and elaborate, and so is the metre with its frequent rhymes and its admirable refrain. It is apparently from the language and the reference to Westmoreland—a border poem, as are most of the anonymous ballads of this period.

The spelling is modernized as far as possible.

1. **among** = from time to time.
4. **never a dele** = not at all; **dele** is 'a part' or 'a bit'; Ger. *Theil*.
10. **than** = then. Observe the skill with which the refrain is here introduced out of its ordinary context.
13. **all day** = every day.
15. **as who saith** = so to speak.
20. **the Nut Brown Maid**, as in the *Ballad of the Brown Girl* (see Mr. Sidgwick's collection above quoted), and throughout ballad literature; to be 'brown' or 'nut-brown' is a disparagement of beauty. 'White' and 'lily white' are epithets of approval. It looks as if this were an allusion to an earlier ballad, and it may be that the whole piece is a new setting of an old song.
28. **in fere**, in company.
53. **the t'one** = the one; so we have 'the t'other,' really a doubling of the article.
58. **rede** = counsel; **can** probably = know.
73. **distrain** = affect you. To distrain is now to put pressure upon a man by seizing his goods.
76. **aslake** = abate; survives in the phrase, 'to slake your thirst.'
80. 'It is no use to think about it.'
81. **loo** = love.
85. **sith that** = since.
94. **anone** = at once.
116. **part** = share.
122. 'It is not lawful for a maiden without hesitation to run out.'
130. **liever** = rather. 'Yet had I rather then that I had gone to the green wood alone.'
133. 'I do not disagree with your remark.'
134. **lore** = learning.
159. 'It is not womanhood to be bold as a knight'—*i.e.*, it is not the part of a woman.
176. 'a bracken bush or two'; bracken, a common fern.
211. **in hele** = in health.

213. **or** = ere, before.
220. **kirtle** = skirt.
235. **ensue** = follow.
246. **hardily** = boldly. He cruelly suggests that she would be willing to go with any lover who asked her.
256. **or**, again = ere.
261. 'and ever shall, although it be my fate to die for it at once.'
270. **yede** = gone.
281. **dele** = deal, how you behave.
291. 'I have provided myself.' This, 'the most unkindest cut of all,' finds a parallel in Chaucer's story of the patient Griselda, which has much in common throughout.
302. **paramour**, sweetheart.
312. **prove** = proof. *Cf.* 'Our wakening and uprising prove' (Keble).
319. 'It were a pity that you should have cause to be sorry for being truthful.'
330. **on the splene**—*i.e.*, in haste.
339. **defend** = forfend, or forbid.
349. This envoy or epilogue is spoken presumably by the man.
356. **if they be**, to see whether they be.
360. Observe once more how admirably this echo of the Nut-brown Maid's refrain is introduced.

XVII.—YOUNG BEKIE.

Although the actual text from which this is taken is that copied by Jamieson in 1783 from the recitation of Mrs. Brown, an old Scotch lady, through whom have come down to us a most valuable collection of early ballads, yet it has been deemed worthy of a place here as a genuine example of the traditional ballad literature; for it is obvious from the language and ideas expressed in them that such pieces go back to the beginnings of English versification. For centuries they have been handed down in one form or other from mouth to mouth, like the nursery rhymes and nursery tales which are nowhere to be found in print, but are the common stock of every European nursery. Of this, the genuine literature of the people, spontaneously generated, as it were, ascribable to no particular epoch, still less to any particular author, *Young Bekie* is, with its naïve simplicity, its quaint directions, its touch of superstition, and the excellence of its story, an admirable example. A similar story, says Mr. Sidgwick, is current in the ballad literature of Scandinavia, Spain, and Italy; and he sees in it, even in the name 'Bekie,' a reference to the story of Gilbert à Becket and his Saracen lover, who liberated him from captivity, followed him to England, and knowing only two words, 'Gilbert' and 'London,' eventually found and married him.

The dialect, as in all these ballads, is Lowland Scotch, or Border English.

1. **Bekie** appears in various forms in the different versions. Here he goes to the Court of France apparently as a soldier of fortune, though later on he appears as a large landed proprietor. Early ballads make very light of these inconsistencies.
10. **Burd** = girl, as we should say 'Miss Isabel.'
12. **mane** = moan, lament.

13. **gin** = if, as in 'Gin a body meet a body'; **borrow** = ransom; **wad** and **would**, both = would.
19. **ha's** = halls. **Linne** constantly occurs as a town in the ballads; it is purely conventional and imaginary.
21. **but** and **ben**: **but** is the outer room, **ben** the inner. The phrase means 'in and out.'
27. **stown** = stolen; **latten** = let; **gang** = go.
31. **but an' the bold rottons** = yes, and the bold rats.
34. **till** = to or for.
38. **royal bone** = ivory.
48. **or than** = or then, or else.
51. **win to**, gain my way to; **kensnae**, knows not.
55. **Belly Blin**: Billie = man; **blin** = blind, a kindly-natured demon.
63. **Marys** = maids; so we speak of the Queen's Maries.
64. **To keep ye**, etc., to amuse you, occupy your mind.
71. **Hollans**, the Dutch boats. The assistance of the Belly Blin overcomes any geographical difficulties.
74. **Domine**, master. This is to be addressed to the Belly Blin.
77. This faithful repetition of the instructions is characteristic of all early literature that depended on recitation, and therefore on memory; it will be found, for example, in Homer.
98. **gin** = given. **guineas**. This must be a later addition to the story; the guine awas only in circulation from 1717-1813.
113. **bierly** = stately. Apparently the bride, though richly costumed in gold, is not considered so handsomely dressed as Burd Isbel, but she maintains that she has a better heart. **braw** = brave.
117. **It** is anticipatory; **him** is reflexive, and Young Bekie explains the subject 'it.'
119. **I'll lay my life** sounds strangely modern.
133. **kent** = known; **lee** = lie; **ilka** = every.
137. Young Bekie speaks.
141. The bride or her mother speaks.

XVIII.—SIR LAUNCELOT AND THE FAWCON.

The stories of King Arthur and his knights are now thoroughly familiar to lovers of literature through Tennyson and his *Idylls of the King*. The origin of them I shall not here discuss; it is too large and difficult a question. Suffice it to say, that we cannot claim King Arthur as an early King of England, predecessor of Alfred and King Edward VII. The legends of his Court are common to all Europe, and gather equally around Brittany and Caerleon-upon-Usk. We first find them told in detail in Latin by Geoffrey of Monmouth (1147), who acknowledges that his materials came from Brittany. Layamon, an early Anglo-Saxon poet, made use of them after him; but in the course of the twelfth century a number of new incidents arose, such as the story of the Holy Grail, of Sir Lancelot, and the Mort d'Arthur, which are not to be found in Geoffrey of Monmouth. This new cycle of romance, of which the authors are said to have been two Englishmen, who wrote in Anglo-Norman French, Robert de Borron and Walter Map, took root rather in France than in England. Sir Thomas Malory, of whom little is known save that he completed his work in 1469 or 1470, translated these French

romances into English for Caxton to print. Caxton, as he tells us, finished the printing of the book *La Mort Darthur* at his press at Westminster Abbey on the last day of July, 1485. Only one copy of this precious book now exists.

Tennyson's work has brought Malory once more into prominence after centuries of neglect. It is the richest storehouse of pure romance in our language, and would supply material for a hundred Tennysons if Heaven would vouchsafe them to us! I have chosen two passages here, one to represent the sort of material which Tennyson did not choose, doubtless because it was too human and too little ideal for him, and the other for deliberate comparison with the most famous of all the *Idylls*.

[I follow here Wright's edition of 1858, which follows that printed by William Stansly in 1634.]

2. **marish** = marsh.
6. **lunes** were long lines attached to the feet of a hawk, used to bring her in.
10. **perigot** perhaps = peregrine.
19. **Northgales** = North Wales.
35. **bole** = trunk.
44. **harneis**, harness, armour.
48. **and I may**, and or an = if.
52. **roundspike.** A 'rounespick' or 'rampick' was a bough of a tree which had lesser branches growing out of it.
59 **sound** = swoon; so **sounded** in line 65.
68. **resort** = attack.

XIX.—MORTE D'ARTHUR.

The following, from the preface to the 1634 edition, explains briefly Malory's account of the last battle and the death of Arthur:

'He was victorious beyond the seas against the Saracens, and by his conquests made many of those misbeleeving Pagans acknowledge the true God. Whilest he was abroad in these noble and heroicall imployments, his nephew, Mordred, whom hee had put in trust with the government of his realme, being puffed up with ambition and possessed with treason, he caused himself to be crowned, and usurped the kingdom; which king Arthur hearing of, hee made quicke expedition into this land, and landed at Dover, where the traytor Mordred was with a mighty army to impeach and hinder the king's arrivall.' King Arthur proposed to settle the fight by single combat, but an accident, the drawing of a sword by a knight attacked by an adder, precipitated a battle between the two armies. There was a great slaughter. Arthur slew Modred, but himself received a death-wound. Here he gives back to the Lady of the Lake the good sword Excalibur, in like manner received. Though the title of this chapter, and indeed of the whole book, is *The Death of Arthur*, there was a firm belief that he would come again. Therefore Tennyson's title is not 'The Death' but 'The Passing of Arthur.' The reader who will compare that poem with this chapter word by word and line by line will learn more about the art of poetry than any book of criticism can teach him.

1. **hieth** = hasteth, draws nigh in haste.
7. **lightly** = quickly, readily. '**Watch what thou seëst and lightly bring me word**" (Tennyson).

9. **pummell**, the knob at the end of the hilt or **haft.**
20. **leefe and deere.** *Cf.* :

> 'Yet now I charge thee quickly go again
> As thou art lief and dear' (Tennyson).

23. **eft** = again.
27. **water wap and the waves waune**, may be explained by Tennyson's

> 'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
> And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To **wap** is an onomatopoetic word ; **waune** is 'wane,' or ebb.
29. **wend** = weened, thought.
39. **girdell about the hilts.** It was a cross hilted sword ; Sir Bedivere wraps the sword-belt round the two guards.
41. **came an arme,** etc. *Cf.* Tennyson :

> 'rose an arm
> Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
> And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
> Three times.'

The words 'clothed in white samite' come from Malory's description of the giving of the sword.
50. **hoved.** 'Then saw they how there **hove** a dusky barge.' 'Hove' is past tense of 'heave' ; we use it in the nautical phrase 'hove in sight.'
67. **Avilion**, or Avallon, is the 'isle' of Glastonbury, in whose Abbey the tomb of Arthur was shown.

XX.—EVERYMAN.

This is a selection from the Morality Play (see the Introduction) of that name. The probability is that it is a translation from the Dutch *Elckerlijk*, written by a priest named Peter Diest, or Peter of Dorland. It was first printed about 1500, but was probably written in the reign of Edward IV. (1461-1483). In spite of its irregular metre and uncertain rhyme, it is a work of the highest literary value, and its dramatic impressiveness is admitted by all who have witnessed its reproduction on the stage.

2. **make feign**, must mean deceive ; perhaps it should be 'fain' = glad.
7. **Fellowship** represents his companions = good company.
8. 'to provide myself with.'
12. **Good** = goods or riches. He appears as a kind of monster, buried under sacks of gold.
21. **lightly** = quickly, as in Malory.
24. **and** = if, as in l. 39.
29. **strait** = strict.
35. **among** = from time to time, as in l. 1 of *The Nut-Brown Maid.*
42. **blind** = illegible.
53. **lesing** = loosing or releasing ; it might, however, be the word found in the Psalms (iv. 2 and v. 6) = lying.
54. **during**, for a time.
58. **or I was ware**, before I was aware of it.

58. **And all I may wyte.** Wyte = blame ; presumably 'all' agrees with 'spending.' The effort to rhyme is responsible for some strange inversions of the natural order.
60. **wend** is past part. of the verb 'to ween' (think).
70. **guise**, custom or habit.
72. **reprief** = reproof.

Everyman then appeals to his Good Deeds, who is so weak that she must needs refer him to Knowledge, who bids him call Beauty, Strength, Five Wits and Discretion ; but after he has been shriven and received the Sacrament on the edge of the grave all these desert him, and his Good Deeds alone goes with him.

XXI.—THE PASTON LETTERS.

For the general character of these letters, see the Introduction, p. 12. The text is here taken from Ramsay's abridgment of Sir John Fenn's large edition (1840). There the spelling is necessarily modernized in view of the frequent errors and abbreviations.

1. The gentlewoman is Margaret Mauteby or Maltby, daughter of John Mauteby, a gentleman of Norfolk ; she became the Margaret Paston of these letters. We have here the first meeting between Margaret and John, Sir William's eldest son. Reedham in Norfolk was Margaret's mother's home.

8. **verily your son**—*i.e.*, just like his father.
9. **no great treaty**, no long delay in arranging the match.
10 **buy her a gown.** Though Margaret was a considerable heiress. Clothing was a very expensive item in those days, and money was scarce.
13. **sanguine**, blood-red or crimson.
14. **pipes of gold**, gold thread on rolls, for embroidery.
15. **stews** are fish-ponds.
17. **Deus qui errantibus**, the beginning of the Collect for the Third Sunday after Easter : 'Almighty God, who shewest to them that be in error the light of Thy truth,' etc. The year is 1440. Paston is in Norfolk.

2. This letter, written on November, 1440, is from Robert Repps, a friend of John Paston, at the Inner Temple. It refers to the release of the Duke of Orleans, who was captured at Agincourt (October 25, 1415), and had been a prisoner for twenty-five years. Henry V. on his death-bed had ordered that the Duke should not be released until peace was concluded. The Duke of Gloucester, uncle to King Henry VI., and now Protector, protested against his liberation, but the Beaufort party prevailed.

1. **Salvete.** Latin = hail.
28. **Arfleet.** Harfleur at the mouth of the Seine in Normandy.
34. **kerchief of pleasaunce**, or scarf of honour, presented him by his 'sovereign lady.'
37. **Sir Richard Woodville**, afterwards Earl Rivers, and father of Elizabeth Woodville, Edward IV.'s Queen. **Sir Christopher Talbot**,

third son of the Earl of Shrewsbury, famous in the French wars. He fell at Northampton in the Wars of the Roses.

41. **An assize of novel disseisin**, a form of action introduced by Henry II. If *A* is in possession of land, and *B* turns him out without trial at law, *A* can have the question decided by twelve *legales homines* summoned by the Sheriff on the King's writ. These men decide simply, 'Was *A* in possession, and has he lately been turned out?' (novel disseisin). If the answer is 'Yes,' *A* must be returned to his possession, and *B*, if he wants the land, must bring a proper action for recovery of it. The twelve *legales homines* were the germ of our civil jury. We gather that Sir Robert Wingfield had been the aggressor in this case, and had seized property belonging to John Lyston.

42. **700 marks**, £466 13s. 4d.

45. **outlawed**. On the back of this letter is written in an ancient hand, 'a lewde practise in those days.'

48. **anon as** = as soon as.

50. **sowde**, a soldier's pay. Norman *solde*, from which our word 'soldier' is derived. This seems to be a particularly shabby transaction among the great ones of the land.

52. **tallies**. A stick was notched and divided between two parties as a kind of contract of payment.

54. **My Lord of Suffolk**, William de la Pole, who is the subject of the tragic story related in Letter 4.

58. **et omnibus aliis quorum interest**, and all others interested.

62. **convenable**—'I had not sufficient suitable time.'

68. **calamo festinante**, with a hasty pen.

3. This letter is from a dependent to John, the newly-created Viscount Beaumont, who was killed at the Battle of Northampton in 1460. As the Viscount received his title in 1439-1440, and Sir Humphrey Stafford was ambushed and slain by Jack Cade's people in 1450, the date of the letter must fall within the decade 1440-1450. It gives a notable picture of the disorders that took place between armed nobles and their followers.

77. **Corpus Christi**, the Thursday after Trinity Sunday.

80. **My Lady of Shrewsbury**, widow of the great Earl of Shrewsbury. Sir Humphrey Stafford was escorting Sir James of Ormond home from a visit to that lady.

82. **Sir Robert Harcourt** distinguished himself in the wars of Henry VI., and was afterwards slain by the Staffords in revenge for this murder.

85. **fell in hands**, fell to blows.

96. **in a Pater Noster while**, in the time that it would take to recite the Lord's Prayer.

111. **taking a distress** means seizing goods in payment of a debt.

4. William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, is represented by history as an ambitious and treacherous man, and such is the character given him by Shakespeare:

> 'By devilish policy art thou grown great,
> And like ambitious Sylla, over gorg'd
> With gobbets of thy mother's bleeding heart.'
>
> *Henry VI.*, Part II.

He was charged with having traitorously yielded to the French and having abetted the murder of 'Good Duke Humphrey.' The Commons began an impeachment against him in 1449, and the King, to appease them, committed him to the Tower, and banished him for five years. We have a pious letter (IX., vol. i., p. 33, in Fenn's large edition) from him to his son. For this tragic account of his execution at sea compare Shakespeare, *Henry VI.*, Part II., Act IV., Scene 1. It will be seen there how true to history is Shakespeare's account.

122. **Monday next after May Day**, May 4. This letter was written on the following day, 1450.
125. **spinner**, now pinnace, a ship's boat.
128. **'Nicholas of the Tower,'** a large ship of Bristol, carrying 150 men.
148. **upon the Impeachments.** This proves that the ship was sent on purpose by the Commons.
150. **he remembered Stacy that said, etc.** Apparently an astrologer had told him this prophecy. Shakespeare gives a curiously different version of it. According to him, Suffolk had been told that he would die by *water*, and he sees a fatal significance in the name of his executioner, *Walter* Whitmore.
155. **stock**, the stump of a tree, for a block. **lewdest**, meanest.
159. **russet**, brown.
162. **great circumstance and prey.** This would mean 'great parade and plunder.' Probably the right reading is 'pray'—that is, his men were put on shore in a great state of agitation, and fell to praying.
168. **they sleep and the fryar also.** Probably an obscure joke.
169. **Sir Thomas Keriel.** This was at the Battle of Fourmigni, 1450. He was executed by Queen Margaret in 1460. The **leg harness** means the foot-gear.
171. **Gooth**, probably Matthew Gough, slain afterwards in Cade's rebellion; a fine soldier.
182. **by your wife, William Lomner.** This appears to be a curious slip of the pen. The writer, W. Lomner, was often employed as secretary by Margaret Paston, and he here seems to forget that he is not acting in that capacity.

5. This letter was written in 1465, but it refers to Jack Cade's rebellion of 1450. It is a petition for charity addressed by a former servant of Sir John Fastolf to the latter's executor, John Paston. This Fastolf, a famous soldier, formerly Governor of Normandy, has been supposed to be the original of Shakespeare's Falstaff. There is no justification for this assumption, as it is tolerably certain that Falstaff was a caricature of Sir John Oldcastle. The letter gives a curious account of the rebels' camp on Blackheath.

195. **whereas** = where.
196. **that is your testator**—*i.e.*, whose executor you are.
199. **to get the articles**, to find out what they had come for.
200. **the Captain**, Jack Cade himself.
207. **to cheer with**, to visit, to enjoy himself with.
214. **a herald of the Duke of Exeter**, presumably a deserter or a prisoner. We are not to suppose that the Duke had joined this rabble.

215. **oyez**, the cry of heralds and criers to attract attention ; from Fr. *oyez* = hear ! Corrupted by the modern crier into ' O yes !'
221. **minished . . . garrisons.** Cade's rebellion expressed, among other things, the popular disgust at the incompetence which had lost the French dominions, a disgust which was not wholly appeased by the murder or execution of Suffolk. Though Sir J. Fastolf had proved an excellent soldier, having defeated the French, especially at the ' Battle of the Herrings,' 1429, he is here charged with having traitorously diminished the garrisons in Normandy, Manche (chief town Cherbourg, then one of the few places in English hands), and Maine.
225. **his place**, his house in Southwark, as mentioned later in this letter.
232. **Poynings** had married John Paston's sister Elizabeth, and was now a follower of Jack Cade, even acting as sword-bearer and carver to the rebel captain.
246. **meny**, household ; modern Fr. *ménage*.
248. **brenned**, burnt ; Ger. *brennen*, to burn. **tenuries**, holdings, possession.
251. **let take me**, ' had me captured.'
254. **muster devillers**, Old Fr., *mestier de velours* = half velvet, or velveteen.
255. **brigandines**, a coat of plate-mail.
259. **rents** = house ; still survives in this sense.
260. **obligation**, a bond to pay this money.
264. **touch of Milan**, of Milan style, Milan being famous for its armour. **perse blue**, at this time apparently a light blue, though later it came to mean a dark blue, from Ital. *perso*. The word is probably derived from the country of Persia.
266. **bogey**, or budge, is rabbit-skin with the fur on.
280. **kirtle**, skirt. **hurling**, commotion ; Fr. *hurlement*, a crying.
292. **per le votre**, by your ; Old French.

6. Agnes Paston, widow of Sir William, is here giving directions about the education of her younger children, Clement, aged fifteen, and Elizabeth, now between twenty and thirty. Clement has left Cambridge, and is now under a tutor, Mr. Greenfield, in London. It is to be observed that though the University came much earlier in a young man's education than now, discipline was not relaxed then or later. As for Elizabeth, she seems to be a paying guest in the house of Lady Pole, a very great lady indeed, if, as probably is the case, she was the daughter of the Earl of Suffolk, Michael de la Pole. Notice that the date of this letter (January, 1457) is previous to that of the last which has been placed before it only because it deals with an earlier date.

303. **10 marks**, £6 13s. 4d., the mark being about £⅔.
304. **lever** = rather ; comparative of ' lief.'
307. **bare**—*i.e.*, those that had the nap off them were to have it renewed. This was the work of the fuller.
308. **musterdevelers**, the same word, differently spelt, as in the last letter.
311. **a side-gown**, a gown to cover the sides or loins — *lateralis vestis ;* they may be seen in pictures of the dress of this period.
312. **russet**, brown. **murray**, a darker shade of brown.

318. **use herself to**, get into the habit of.
323. **the noble**, 6s. 8d. The larger sum mentioned above is to be given at the end of the period of tuition.

7. We see here how the Wars of the Roses left England at the mercy of her enemies, so that life on the seacoasts was very insecure. All the places here mentioned—Paston, Winterton, Happesburgh, and Eccles—are on the Norfolk coast between Yarmouth and Cromer.

333. **and have him forth**, and they have taken him away.
334. **a pilgrim**. Note the universal respect paid to pilgrims in those days. He was probably on the way to the famous shrine of Walsingham, in Norfolk.
340. **for taking of me**, afraid of my being captured.
347. **Alson** = Alison.
354. **St. Gregory's** Day is March 12.

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